The Worst Job in Washington

Washington MONTHLY

More Boots on the Ground:

The Case for the Draft

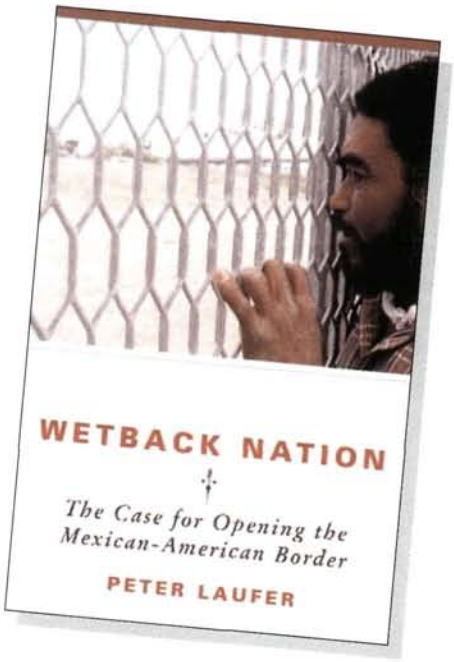
by Phillip Carter & Paul Glastris

rch 2005 $4.50

Is Grover over? • Is our economy losing its competitive edge? 7 mistakes superheroines make • The brutality of women's boxing • Daniel Schorr on Alistair Cooke

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Peter Laufer's explosive proposals for opening the Mexican-American border have stirred up a hornet's nest of debate over U.S. immigration policy



WETBACK NATION

Peter Laufer

"A captivating, informative read infused with a deep and genuine empathy for those who suffer the most under current immigration policy. It delivers a powerful argument for, if not completely abandoning border control, at least radically rethinking America's current approach to it."—JOHN BRADY, *San Francisco Chronicle*

"Outrageously simply—and quite possibly workable—solutions to a very old problem."
—SANFORD J. UNGAR, author of *Fresh Blood*

"*Wetback Nation* makes a strong case for simply opening the border.... To bolster his argument, Laufer offers a fascinating series of vignettes."—GILBERTO ROSAS, *Austin American-Statesman*

"Laufer cuts through the polarized sentiment and rhetoric chronically plaguing the immigration debate by going straight to the source, vividly examining individuals and their situations on both sides of the border.... *Wetback Nation* is sure to ignite debate over immigration policy."—GUS GONZALES, *San Antonio Express-News*

"We can act or be overwhelmed by events, Laufer concludes. 'Now or later,' he predicts, 'the artificial line separating Mexico from the United States (and Mexico's former land) will disappear."—ANTHONY DAY, *Los Angeles Times*

"An extraordinary contribution to the Mexican immigration debate.... I love the book."
—ROSENTAL CALMON ALVES, University of Texas

Ivan R. Dee, Publisher
Chicago • A Member of the
Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group
www.ivanrdee.com
At your bookseller, or order toll-free
1-800-462-6420 with a major credit card.

Washington Monthly readers may save **30%** from the $26 retail price by calling with this promotional code:
9S5WASHM

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Washington MONTHLY

Volume 37, No. 3
March 2005

FEATURES

5 **Tilting at Windmills**
King of the freebies ... Lunatics and dermatologists ... What's not to like? ... The pussycat that roared ...
by Charles Peters

12 **Postmodern Protests**
Why modern marches matter only to the marchers.
by Christina Larson

15 **Is Grover Over?**
Norquist's anti-tax jihad stumbles in the states.
by Daniel Franklin and A.G. Newmyer III

18 ***COVER STORY:***

The Case for The Draft
America can remain the world's superpower. Or it can maintain its all-volunteer military. It can't do both.
by Phillip Carter and Paul Glastris

26 **Off Track**
America's economy is losing its competitive edge, and Washington hasn't noticed.
by Benjamin Wallace-Wells

34 **Battered Women**
Female boxing is brutal and hopeless.
by Benjamin Wallace-Wells

37 **7 Mistakes Superheroines Make**
Why the latest action-babe flicks flopped.
by Christina Larson

UPFRONT

2 **Letters**

9 **10 Miles Square**

The Worst Job in Washington
They're still answering phones at the Kerry campaign.
by Daniel Franklin

Micro Profile
The State Department official who teaches big-money donors how to be ambassadors.
by Justin Peters

Plus: The Newt-o-meter

ONPOLITICALBOOKS

39 **The Newt Republic**
Gingrich's ideas were feisty and combative, but ultimately as nihilistic as they were visionary.
by Michael Crowley

42 **Name Games**
Microsoft by any other name would sell as well.
by Jamie Malanowski

43 **Riches to Rags**
How legendary fraud Charles Ponzi's schemes crumbled.
by Brendan I. Koerner

46 **The Good Fight**
How much longer can the religious left remain politically neutral?
by Amy Sullivan

49 **Ignorance Is Bliss?**
Ken Lay may have been as clueless as his lawyers claim. It shouldn't matter.
by Marianne Lavelle

51 **The Observer; The Independent; The Guardian**
Remembering Alistair Cooke.
by Daniel Schorr

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letters

Novak Is an Island

It is always amazing to watch the national media tiptoeing around Bob Novak ("Bob in Paradise" by Amy Sullivan, December 2004). Friend of theirs or not, the man is wrong; he outed an agent. It is unfortunate that no one is holding him accountable. However, this seems to be the prevailing mood in Washington, where a congressman can break campaign finance laws and still come out like a rose.

So much for moral values—apparently they only apply to everyone outside the Beltway.

Rita Luther
West Des Moines, Iowa

Just because Novak will not talk about Valerie Plame doesn't mean other journalists can't talk about her, and about him. There is one question that would put everything into perspective:

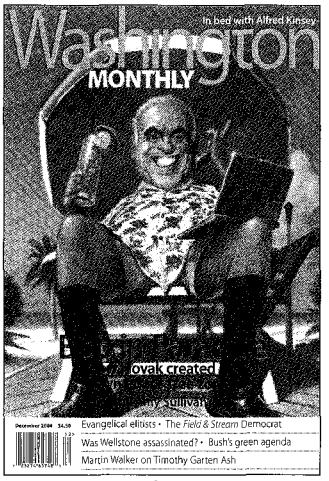
"What would Novak have said if a liberal journalist, say, Katrina van den Heuvel, had identified a CIA agent whose husband had publicly criticized Bill Clinton?"

Answer: He'd have called for Katrina's arrest as a traitor.

Robert L. Mills
Monroe, Conn.

Clearing the Air

Every once in a while, *The Washington Monthly* publishes an article that justifies the magazine's entire existence. I remember, years ago, a marvelous piece that described the stations of indignant denial, prevarication, trimming, excuse-making, and illness that public figures inevitably pass through when they're caught. With David Whitman's non-partisan analysis of the fate of Bush's Clear Skies initiative, you have done it again ("Partly Sunny," December 2004). His article should be required reading for all policy wonks, especially environmentalists. It makes clear how dangerous and self-defeating it is for pubic



December 2004

interest groups to succumb to dishonesty for the sake of tactical advantage, and graphically demonstrates the stupidity of demonization. I say this as a life member of the Sierra Club, a liberal Democrat, and a citizen deeply disgusted by the moral bankruptcy of the Bush presidency.

Keith Roberts
New York, N.Y.

Righting Kinsey

For me, this is a definitive piece, something Kinsey has deserved for a long time—an exhaustively researched and carefully considered examina-tion of a very complex debate. It also left me with a great sense of relief. It's hard to describe, but there's a thudding sadness (internalized rage?) that builds up as the distortions of Kinsey's detractors, especially Judith Reisman, are repeatedly unexamined in the national press. It's nice to have this article to hold on to.

Bill Condon
Screenwriter/director of *Kinsey*; screenwriter of *Chicago*

Schweitzer Spinning

I'm surprised and a little disappointed to see *The Washington Monthly* allow a campaign worker/consultant to write an analytical piece on the very campaign for which he worked ("Top Billings" by David Sirota, December 2004). His piece did include some interesting insights into Schweitzer's winning campaign. But it also contained numerous statements I would consider, at best, regurgitated campaign rhetoric, or, at worst, just plain wrong.

For example, he says "one of the defining moments" in the campaign was a Schweitzer press conference scolding his Republican opponent Bob Brown for spending $40,000 of taxpayer money to redecorate Brown's office while secretary of state. This "defining moment" was viewed by most reporters covering the race as a minor campaign stunt and received scant coverage. Sirota also repeats Schweitzer campaign mantras that Brown was a "corporate lobbyist" and a "career politician" who "spent his career passing tax breaks for companies that, once he was out of office, became his lobbying clients." In fact, the bulk of Brown's professional career was spent as a high school teacher and education administrator. Also, the two tax breaks for which Democrats and Schweitzer criticized Brown were approved by huge, bipartisan majorities in the Montana legislature.

Sirota's recitation of Montana political history also has a few holes. He states that Goldman Sachs executives "engineered the takeover—and eventual

"Just because Bob Novak will not talk about Valerie Plame doesn't mean other journalists can't talk about her, and about him.."
—Robert L. Mills
Monroe, Conn.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

takedown—of Montana Power, one of the state's economic gems." Goldman Sachs was a financial advisor to Montana Power Co. for its own fatal decision to restructure and sell off parts of the company. Nobody "took over" the company. Whether Goldman Sachs played a more pivotal role in the sell-off is the subject of lawsuits filed by shareholders, but nothing has been proven.

I could go on, but you get the idea. It's clear that Sirota was more interested in promoting Schweitzer than giving readers the unvarnished truth—but then, that's what campaign workers are supposed to do. The question is why the *Monthly* allows this sort of piece to be presented as journalism. It makes me doubt the credibility of a magazine that I've respected for years.

Mike Dennison
Great Falls Tribune (Mont.)
Washington bureau chief.

***Paul Glastris** responds: Though we at the* Monthly *have the utmost respect for political and other reporters, we've never subscribed to the philosophy that journalists have a monopoly on information or credibility. Indeed, for over 35 years, we've prided ourselves in publishing pieces by people inside the system—be they soldiers, civil servants, or campaign operatives—on the theory that these individuals have information about and perspective on what's really happening inside their organizations that outsiders, including even the most diligent reporters, simply don't. It was in this spirit that we were pleased and proud to publish David Sirota's piece.*

***David Sirota** responds: Dennison says the event criticizing the $40,000 spent by Brown refurbishing his office wasn't a defining moment—but it was. It was emblematic of the campaign we were running against Brown, and, more broadly, against the insider culture in Helena. With regard to Goldman Sachs, while Montana Power may not have been officially taken over by new owners, it was effectively taken over when it opted not to consult with shareholders and depart from its historical roots as an energy company to become the telecommu-*

Call for entries for The Washington Monthly's 2004 Annual Political Book Award

We like to curl up with a good muckraking book from time to time, but our used copy of *The Jungle* is so musty that it's starting to make us sneeze. Which makes this the right time to once again call for candidates for *The Washington Monthly*'s Annual Political Book Award. Muckraking isn't a required characteristic—the award is presented to a broad array of nonfiction titles from the past year that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. But we are particularly interested in reporting that helps us understand what institutions—whether government agencies, the media, corporations, unions, or others—contribute to the existence of public problems and who develops solutions.

Please send nominations to Books Editor Kukula Glastris:
kglastris@washingtonmonthly.com
tel: 202-393-5155 fax: 202-393-2444
733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005

Washington MONTHLY

Paul Glastris
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Markos Kounalakis
PUBLISHER AND PRESIDENT

Charles Peters
FOUNDING EDITOR

Editors: Amy Sullivan, Benjamin Wallace-Wells
Managing Editor: Christina Larson
Books Editor: Kukula Kapoor Glastris
Consulting Editors: Roger Cohn, Daniel Franklin
Contributing Writers: Kevin Drum, Joshua Micah Marshall
Vice President, Development: Amy L. Keltz
Associate Publisher: Carl Iseli
Contributing Editors: Jonathan Alter, Thomas N. Bethell, Tom Bethell, Katherine Boo, Taylor Branch, Matthew Cooper, Michelle Cottle, Gregg Easterbrook, John Eisendrath, James Fallows, Joshua Green, Mickey Kaus, Phil Keisling, Michael Kinsley, Nicholas Lemann, Suzannah Lessard, Arthur Levine, Jon Meacham, Stephanie Mencimer, Matthew Miller, Timothy Noah, Joseph Nocera, Leonard Reed, John Rothchild, Stephen Pomper, Jonathan Rowe, David Segal, Walter Shapiro, Joshua Wolf Shenk, Nicholas Thompson, Steven Waldman, Robert Worth
Editorial Advisory Board: Nicholas Lemann, *Chair*, Clara Bingham, Debra Dickerson, James Fallows
Founders' Board: Charles W. Bailey, Russell Baker, James David Barber, Edgar Cahn, David Halberstam, Richard Reeves, Hugh Sidey
Editorial Assistant: Soyoung Ho
Editorial Fellows: Matthew Harwood, Justin Peters
Intern: Sasha Belenky
Business Manager: Claire Iseli
Research Assistant: Christina Schmidt
Assistant to the Publisher: Velia Amarasingham
Office Manager/Assistant to Business Manager: India Baker
Subscription Assistant: Allison Pegelow
Fact-checker: Timothy Dickinson
Proofreader: Sally Cutler

Subscription Rates: U.S. and possessions: one year, $44.95; two years, $79.95; three years, $109.95. For Canadian and foreign subscriptions, add $10 for surface delivery; air mail delivery add $32. Back issues, $5. The Washington Monthly is indexed in the Book Review Index, Political Science Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service, the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, and Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Published monthly except combined Jan./Feb. and July/Aug. issues by The Washington Monthly, LLC, wholly owned by W.M. Corporation, a District of Columbia nonprofit corporation.

Reprint Rights: Please call Soyoung Ho at 202-393-5155, or send an email to editors@washingtonmonthly.com.

Subscription Service: Please call our customer service department toll-free at (877) 765-4849, or send an email to service@washingtonmonthly.com.

Advertising Sales: Please call Linda Miller at MKTG Services at 215-968-5020, ext. 162. Fax: 215-504-5256. Email: lmiller@mktgservices.com.

Services for the Visually Handicapped: Please contact Kathy Bouening of Volunteer Services for the Visually Handicapped, at 414-286-3039, to request a recording of this magazine for $2.25 per cassette.

© 2005 The Washington Monthly LLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.

ISSN 0043-0633. Postmaster: Send change of address to The Washington Monthly, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. and at additional mailing offices. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope unless emailed:

Editorial offices: 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005; tel: 202-393-5155 / fax: 202-393-2444
Publishing offices: 916 Kearny Street, San Francisco, CA 94133; tel: 415-402-0252 / fax: 415-402-0922
www.washingtonmonthly.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Washington Monthly's

Monthly Journalism Award

Kevin Begos

"Good Intentions, Harsh Reality"

Winston-Salem Journal

January 24, 2005

Begos documents the promise and failures of the Research Triangle Institute, the North Carolina contractor assigned by the U.S. Agency for International Development to promote democracy in Iraq, after the fall of Baghdad. The contractors struggled with hostile Iraqi radicals, suspicious citizens, and a "monstrous bureaucracy that was literally unable to procure sand for defensive sandbags." Begos precisely captures the promise and difficulty of building democracy in an occupied land. Last year, the U.S. Agency for International Development cut the contract for democracy-building in Iraq from its operations, and the well-meaning, "in over their heads" workers from RTI are going home.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Or email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com.

nications company Touch America. It is hard to argue that Goldman Sachs, the financial firm that played an integral role in Montana Power's transformation, had nothing to do with Montana Power's decisions. As CBS' "60 Minutes" has reported, "As financial advisors to Montana Power, Goldman Sachs executives made more than 100 trips to Montana urging the company to get out of the utility business," including making "the crucial presentations to the board of directors."

Sirota's account of Brian Schweitzer's successful run for governor was informative and factually accurate, but suffered from his view as a campaign insider and Montana outsider. He gives too much credit to the candidate's economic populism and not enough to the work that created fertile ground for such a campaign to succeed. The fact that control of the Montana House and Senate both switched to Democrats for the first time in many years makes clear that Schweitzer was part of something bigger.

Hard-hitting populist groups such as the Northern Plains Resource Council and ReclaimDemocracy.org, among others, helped spark widespread opposition to Republican coziness with extractive industries. The former led rural opposition to destructive oil and gas development, the latter successfully painted an initiative to reverse a ban on cyanide use in gold mining as a corporate assault on the authority of Montanans. Revving up anti-corporate sentiment gave a big boost to Schweitzer and facilitated a statewide shift to Democrats on election day.

I give much credit to Schweitzer's tireless and effective campaign, but progressives should realize that the work of effective non-partisan groups typically shifts people's minds and hearts more than politicians. Elections provide benchmarks of their progress and transfer the power created at the grassroots.

Jeffrey Ross
Belgrade, Mont.

Not False Church

As a faithful member of The Falls Church since 1982, I feel compelled to comment on your article ("Evangelical Elitists" by Ayelish McGarvey, December 2004). While it is true that we have attracted a large number of new members to our congregation because we are an intellectual evangelical church, not all of the liberals have departed. We non-conservatives remain, small in number but mighty in will, as the larger drama plays out in our local church, the Diocese of Virginia, and the national Church.

Among the congregants you will find Democrats and liberals as well as the conservative Republicans. At the 9 o'clock "blended service," we sing out of hymn books with a robed choir, traditionally vested clergy, and our wonderful organ in the newer building. We may disagree politically, but what binds us is a firm belief in Jesus Christ and his teachings as the foundation for our lives. I count among my friends a former staffer for John Ashcroft; while we will never agree politically, we can talk and laugh for hours about our families and our lives knowing we are bound by a common faith, not separated by ideology.

Deborah Miller
Falls Church, Va.

Correction:

In "Evangelical Elitists" by Ayelish McGarvey (December 2004), conservative commentator Tucker Carlson was identified as a member of The Falls Church Episcopal. In fact, Mr. Carlson has not attended The Falls Church for a number of years and currently attends another Episcopal church in Virginia. We regret the error.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tilting at **Windmills**

by **Charles Peters**, founding editor

King of the freebies

Although Clarence Thomas is not ordinarily viewed as pre-eminent among the justices of the United States Supreme Court, he is their leader in at least one respect: His rule as King of the Freebies is absolutely secure. The *Los Angeles Times* has reviewed records of gifts to justices between 1998 and 2003, and found that "Thomas accepted $42,200 in gifts, making him the top recipient." By far. The next highest justice received less than $6,000, roughly one-seventh of Thomas's take.

Exactly the qualities we're looking for!

The Army's report on prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib found that Lieutenant Colonel James O'Hare of the 800th Military Police brigade "appears to lack initiative and was unwilling to accept responsibility for any of his actions." O'Hare's punishment, according to Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough of *The Washington Times*: He has been promoted to full colonel.

Where credit's due

New York Post columnist John Podhoretz asked liberals: "Did you momentarily feel a rush of disappointment [at the news of the January 30 Iraq election] because you knew, you just knew, that this was going to redound to the credit of George W. Bush?" I plead guilty, and remind myself and my fellow liberals that even though we are convinced that the invasion of Iraq was a terrible idea, we must welcome any good that might result.

Intimidate the intimidators

You may have heard about the DVD called "Stop Snitching" that advocates witness intimidation and that emphasizes its point with an illustration on its back cover showing three dead bodies over the words "snitch prevention." In Baltimore, where this DVD is on sale, Ricky Prince, a witness to a gang shooting who had agreed to testify, was recently shot in the head. Organized crime's custom of eliminating witnesses has spread to street gangs. This may be happening because, as I have often complained, the punishment for witness intimidation can be absurdly light. In Maryland, it is classed as a misdemeanor with a maximum penalty of five years. Gov. Robert Ehrlich is proposing to make it a felony, with a maximum sentence of 20 years. I hope he prevails, and that other states will follow.

We'll always have Berkeley

Liberals can take heart from a recent national survey of college students reported by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The percentage of freshmen who describe themselves as liberal has risen from 20.7 percent during Ronald Reagan's heyday in 1982, when they were practically tied with the conservatives, to 27 percent today—a 4.3 percent lead over conservatives. And at the University of California's Berkeley campus, the story is even better. In 1982, liberals led conservatives by only 12.1 percent. Today, 51.2 percent say they are liberal, against only 12 percent who describe themselves as conservative, and 36.8 percent who say they are in the middle of the road. One worry nags at the back of my mind. How much did the Berkeley liberals inflate the national average?

Family values

U.S. News & World Report's Jan. 31 issue has an interesting section on health care. Among other findings, it reports that young doctors want a life outside medicine. A majority of applicants to medical schools are now women and they work fewer hours than male physicians have been accustomed to. They want to spend time with their husbands and children, and they refuse to be defined solely by their careers. Many younger male doctors have similar feelings.

In the past, this would have troubled me. I used to think that work of the highest quality required lunatic commitment. Indeed, I demanded this kind of commitment from the young people who worked here. But I've learned from the lives of these young people after they escape my clutches. All but a handful are happily married with children and are devoted spouses and parents, finding time for their families even as they continue to do excellent work.

I was reminded of this lesson by the recent death of Marjorie Williams, who married a *Monthly* alumnus and became part of our extended family. Marjorie wrote articles and essays that were almost uniformly superb. But she managed to produce them without sacrificing her sanity or her family. In fact, she was among the kindest and most thoughtful of all my friends. That many others felt the same way was demonstrated by the large crowd that attended her memorial service at National Cathedral and by the grief visible on almost every face when it came to a close.

Lunatics and dermatologists

So I know that many of these

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

young doctors will, like Marjorie, combine sane lives and good work. But it must be acknowledged that some troubling trends accompany their rejection of lunatic commitment.

There is a shortage of primary care physicians. These are the front-line doctors on whom most of us depend. They have to work long hours for relatively low pay. Shortages also loom among surgical specialists, obstetricians-gynecologists, and others whose hours are hard to control. Medical students are saying that the "R.O.A.D." to happiness lies in radiology, ophthalmology, anesthesiology, and dermatology, all of which make modest demands on the physician's time. Last year's medical school graduates filled 97 percent of the dermatology residency slots available in U.S. hospitals, but only 41 percent of those in primary care.

What's not to like?

I think I learned the lunatic effort principle from the practice of law, in which I engaged for four years, long ago. It is true that when you are trying a case against a smart lawyer, you better be sure you work harder than he does. But—and this is the important point—you do not have to try one case after another. If you're good, you'll win enough so that you can take breaks in between cases. Just don't join one of those firms that are obsessed with billable hours. If you want to see what that kind of firm makes you do to your family and associates, take a look at the Web site, www.anonymous lawyer.blogspot. com, written by a third-year Harvard Law student who has managed to parlay a summer with a big-city law firm into an astonishingly accurate portrayal of the trap that snaps shut on those who enter such firms. "You never see your kids. And they hate you. And then you don't even want to go home, and so you stay at the office, and the spiral continues."

Blue-state Republicans?

Of all the dismaying facts the Democrats have had to face since November, the toughest for me is the trend in blue-state exurbia. In December, the *Los Angeles Times* noted that the proportion of California counties voting Republican has reached two-thirds. The winter 2005 issue of *City Journal* adds that about 75 percent of New York counties now vote Republican, as do, amazingly, about 90 percent of those in Pennsylvania. To top it all off, former Rep. Tim Roemer says that 97 of the nation's 100 fastest-growing counties voted for Bush in November.

A high-price to pay for a cheap waffle-maker

Parents enroll their children in the government's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) because their own employers do not provide their families with adequate health coverage. The *Charleston Gazette* recently revealed that the West Virginia company with the most employees filing for CHIP coverage is Wal-Mart. It beats the next highest employer by three to one. In Georgia, the situation is worse. Wal-Mart children constitute 14 times the number of the state's next highest employer's applicants for CHIP, according to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

Wal-Mart does offer a health insurance plan for its employees, who can participate if they can pony up 10 percent of their income before federal and state taxes have been deducted. But, and this is a big but, Wal-Mart does not offer family health insurance to its part-time employees. They are not just an occasional fellow here and there, but one-fourth of all its workers. Wal-Mart has left their health care to the taxpayer, as its owners have become three of the five richest Americans.

Good counsel

I like Chuck Colson's advice to his fellow evangelists about their apparent triumph in the November election: "Sad to say, the Church has managed to shoot itself in the foot almost every time it has achieved power in society. So what we need now is a bracing dose of humility."

I'm sorry, did you say anything?

Norman Mailer urges that we ban television commercials. In a recent article in the Sunday supplement, *Parade*, he argues that our ability to concentrate is being destroyed by the barrage of commercials that interrupt television shows every few minutes and dramatically reduce the viewers' attention span. Mailer notes that the number of books read annually by teenagers declined more than 25 percent from 1982 to 2002.

Mailer wants us to pay for television, so that the need for commercial sponsorship could be eliminated. I doubt that people will support such a radical step, although I certainly would. But I do see realistic hope for eliminating some harmful commercials.

Side effects may include overpayment

Our first target should be prescription drug commercials. These were banned until a few years ago, but have rapidly proliferated. In 2003, Pfizer spent $87.6 million on marketing Celebrex, and Merck spent $79.2 million on Vioxx. Since these drugs have been found to significantly increase the risk of heart disease, the harm they do is clear. A study published recently in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* shows that the good

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

these drugs do could be effectively accomplished by much cheaper over-the-counter products in the case of at least 73 percent of patients.

That's a lot of frooty pebbles

My next target would be commercials on children's shows. That is where the first and, to me, the most dangerous assault on the attention span takes place. It is also where kids are given a jump start on the road to obesity. According to columnist Michael Fumento, author of *The Fat of the Land* and not a man given to attacking corporate misdeeds, kids watch an average of 40,000 commercials a year, roughly half of which are food ads. And 90 percent of those are for junk food. Since Americans now fret about fat as never before, a prohibition of junk food ads may just be an idea whose time has come.

There'll always be other advertisers

If you think it is unrealistic to eliminate drug or children's commercials, just remember that some years ago we prohibited cigarette commercials. Since tobacco advertising then constituted a major source of income for television networks and stations, there was widespread fear of the economic consequences. But other sources of revenue appeared and television flourished.

So that's who that jerk was!

Rep. Bill Thomas (R-Calif.) was voted the "brainiest" congressman in a survey of Capitol Hill staffers conducted by *Washingtonian* magazine. He was also voted "meanest." Michael Crowley explains the latter in the Feb. 7 issue of *The New Republic*: A former aide recalls "boarding a Capitol elevator with Thomas and seeing him 'vigorously' jab the door close button as a group of tourists approached. When the door shut in their faces, Thomas gleefully chuckled."

Try holding the cocktail party in a cave

Having long contended that the CIA needs more NOCs (spies with non-official cover), I'm happy to find my position supported by Reuel Marc Gerecht in a recent *Washington Post* op-ed. If you've heard Gerecht pontificate on the Middle East, you might find his views a little more hawkish than your own. I certainly do. But in describing the facts of life within the CIA, few do it better than Gerecht. His February 1998 article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, "Can't Anybody Here Play This Game?" written under the pseudonym "Edward G. Shirley" remains the best thing I've read about the culture of the CIA.

What he says now is that the case officers who represent the vast majority of the CIA's spies are in fact hopelessly unsuited to effective espionage. They operate as American embassy officers and are pathetically easy for our enemies to spot. Their favored milieu, embassy cocktail parties, was useful in recruiting Soviet diplomats but is definitely not where members of al Qaeda congregate. Nevertheless, we have lots of case officers and few NOCs, because case officers are the way it has been done and the old boys always like to stick to the old ways. Also NOCs, who operate completely outside American embassies, pose bureaucratic problems. How are they to be paid, should taxes be deducted, and most absurd, as we mentioned in our last issue, should they be required to travel on American airlines. But the point is, the only way to have more spies is to have more NOCs, meaning the bureaucratic problems must be overcome.

Pork Chop goes to the Derby

I was recently reminded that some color left my life when I moved to Washington from my native West Virginia. The state's former assistant school superintendent, G.A. McClung, has just been indicted, according to the *Charleston Gazette*, for allegedly awarding two and a half million dollars in contracts to Phillip "Pork Chop" Booth. It seemed that Booth had not only forgiven loans to McClung, but had treated him to tickets to the Kentucky Derby and a Bahamas cruise for two. Pork Chop made a profit of over $400,000. Unfortunately however, he now faces the possibility of 15 years as a guest of the state penitentiary.

The pussycat that roared

Federal regulators often behave like pussycats. The reason is not that they are bad guys, but that they fear that their budgets might be cut by congressional friends of the regulat-

GIVE THEM GALOSHES

Washington's civil servants are splendid fellows in many respects, but they are sissies about snow. Hundreds of air marshals were grounded for eight hours in January because the government employees who man the air marshals' Missions Operations Center did not report for duty. The reason: An inch of snow had fallen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ed industry in case the industry finds them too tough. That is why the fellows at the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise, led by its director Armando Falcon Jr., deserve special praise. They blew the whistle on Fannie Mae, one of the most powerful organizations in Washington, famous for its cultivation of influential friends in Congress and elsewhere. Falcon, by the way, was not appointed by George W. Bush but by William Jefferson Clinton.

It's not that we couldn't use a good translator

You may recall Sibel Edmonds, the female linguist who complained on "60 Minutes" about the inept translations, bad management, and possible espionage in the FBI translation section. You may have greeted Ms. Edmonds' charges with some skepticism. After all, there's always the possibility that a whistleblower is a nut or has some ax to grind against the agency involved. The FBI was more than skeptical. It fired Edmonds.

Was the FBI justified, or was this another example of the Bureau's distaste for dissent? We now have the answer in the form of a report from the Inspector General of the Department of Justice. It finds that many of her allegations, according to Eric Lichtblau of *The New York Times*, "were supported, that the FBI did not take them seriously enough, and that her allegations were, in fact, the most significant factor in the FBI's decision to terminate her services."

Trust us

In the largest merger of last year, J.P. Morgan acquired Bank One. Morgan assured its investors that it had not paid too much, telling them that it was sure the price was fair because it had sought an opinion from one of "the top five financial advisors in the world."

Marjorie Williams wrote articles and essays that were almost uniformly superb. But she managed to produce them without sacrificing her sanity or her family.

The investors might have been just a tad dubious about the objectivity of the "top financial advisor" if they had known what Ann David and Marsha Longley of *The Wall Street Journal* later discovered: The advisor was J.P. Morgan itself. The two reporters also found out that Bank One's CEO, Jamie Dimon, had actually offered to sell his company for several billion less on condition that he be named head of the merged entity. Perhaps Morgan's shareholders would have preferred the combination of Dimon and the lower price. But Morgan's CEO, William Harrison, decided to spare them the knowledge that might endanger his own job. He had his minions describe the higher price as fair and did not bother to disclose the lower offer.

Is this case unusual? Not according to the *Journal*'s reporters, who say that "it is an open secret on Wall Street that bankers' opinions are anything but arms-length."

And we're really cutting costs on this one

The Army has estimated $3.6 billion for Iraq expenses that Halliburton says will cost nearly $7 billion. Guess what the taxpayers will ultimately pay?

That would certainly disrupt the conga line

If you're thinking of taking a cruise, you may want to reconsider. Here's what David Burpee of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency told the Associated Press about that uncharted mountain in the Pacific that the U.S.S. San Francisco smacked into during January of this year.

"The charts used today may not reflect the reality....You think (the charts) are right until somebody tells you they are not....

"It's not like there was one little area that got away from us that escaped detection. This is part of a massive amount of sea that has not been mapped or charted in detail."

How long will it take to remedy this problem? Using all of the 150 ships in the world that can do mapping and charting work, the answer is 30 years.

Losing faith in Feith

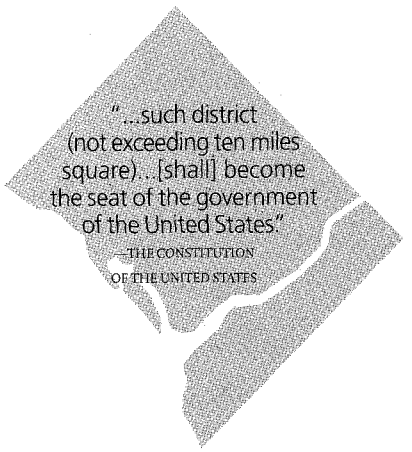
It's hard to believe, but the Bush administration is actually getting rid of someone who screwed up on Iraq: Douglas Feith, one of the parties in the failure to face the potential post-war problems, is going "to spend more time with his family."

Also it's cheap

One trend that I would like to stop in its tracks: "A small but growing number of families are pulling up stakes," reports *The New York Times*, "selling the house and following the children to boarding school." I sympathize with the kids and their parents. Having spent a miserable ninth grade away from home at a military school, I know how lonely it can be for the child and for Mom and Dad. But the answer to the problem is not to uproot the family, but to do what I did and return to public school. Have faith in your child's ability to overcome the limitations of public education. That confidence will do more for him than any prep school.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

10 MILES SQUARE



The Worst Job in Washington

They're still answering phones at the Kerry campaign.

By Daniel Franklin

In early February, three months after the end of the presidential election, I heard that the Kerry-Edwards campaign headquarters was still open for some reason. Curious, I walked from the offices of *The Washington Monthly* to its building on McPherson Square, three blocks from the White House.

Just inside the entrance, across from a security desk, was a building directory with the names of various law firms and lobby shops, but no listing for the John Kerry for President offices. The security guard noticed me studying the directory. "Can I help you?" she said. "Is the Kerry campaign still here?" "Sixth floor. I need you to sign and show picture I.D." And I was off.

When the elevator doors opened, there was still no sign of the campaign. Every door was locked and unmarked. Around one corner, slightly open, was the door to a closet filled with cardboard boxes. Out of one fell a bumper sticker which read: "Like father, like son. One term and you're done." I was in the right place.

Around the next corner I saw a sliding window that opened onto a mailroom. "Kerry for President" signs were taped to the walls. Steel shelves held bins filled with dozens of cellphones. Next to them, more bins overflowed with satellite-TV receivers. I knocked, but there was no answer. Just then, a young man, mid-twenties and casually dressed, emerged from the elevator. "Is this the Kerry campaign?" He nodded. "May I talk to who's in charge, please?"

Swiping an electronic passcard in front of one of the unmarked doors, he led the way in to a large office, where he asked me to wait while he asked the director if he would see me. The office seemed typical. About a dozen staffers sat at computers working on what appeared to be spreadsheets. The only off-kilter detail was the large, white dry-erase board. Written in large letters across the top was, "Kerry-Edwards victory party. Live from Copley Square. 8:30." On the left side, in blue marker, were the names of the states that went for Kerry, their electoral votes written beside them. On the right, in red, the states won by Bush. No one had bothered to add up the totals. And no one, in all the days since Kerry had conceded defeat, had summoned the heart to erase the board.

JARGON WATCH:
The Taliban Litmus Test

"The freedom to worship or not worship is what makes us different from the Taliban."
—President George W. Bush, Washington, DC

"Our freedom to burn the flag makes us different from the Taliban."
—State's attorney, Western Australia

"The City Council says we can't fly kites at the church's annual picnic? They're worse than the Taliban."
—Church Secretary, Ireland

"The nuns who ran the laundries were worse than the Taliban."
—Peter Mullan, director of a Scottish independent film detailing sexual abuse in convents

"The mentality of the Project for a New American Century isn't any different from the Taliban."
—Columnist, University of Houston Daily Cougar

"Shariah law here will be different from the Taliban."
—Sirajul Huq, a newly elected Islamic right politician in a Pakistani province

"Mike Tyson...is worse than the Taliban."
—Rudy Giuliani

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Micro-Profile:

The State Department official who teaches big-money donors how to be ambassadors.

By Justin Peters

So you raised a bunch of money for the Bush campaign and, for your efforts, you've just been named ambassador to some tropical paradise—but the extent of your previous involvement in international diplomacy consists of watching the Harlem Globetrotters once or twice. Henry James's book *The Ambassadors* certainly isn't the job training manual that you anticipated. How's a patronage diplomat supposed to learn the ropes?

Meet Prudence Bushnell, the petite former ambassador to Guatemala and Kenya and current dean of the Foreign Service Institute's School of Leadership and Management. From her office on the fourth floor of Building E on the Foreign Service Institute's spacious Arlington, Va., campus, Bushnell and her staff are responsible for training those tapped by the president to be ambassadors to various countries. During two weeks of intensive coursework, the ambassadors-to-be learn the finer points of their new job: staff management, media relations, and other diplomatic skills. But the course covers more than the niceties of party planning and fork-using. In recent years, security issues have become a primary focus of the training curriculum—and as a woman whose embassy was blown up from under her while she was in Kenya, Bushnell knows the importance of precautionary measures. "We're training people to look both ways before they cross the street," she says.

The one trait that matters most, according to Bushnell, is leadership—the ability to manage and guide a disparate community of government employees and expatriates while simultaneously promulgating American interests and values through the auspices of the mission. Bushnell trains both career diplomats and political appointees and professes to find little difference between State Department veterans and big-money campaign donors. "Most of the people from outside are leaders anyway," says Bushnell. Of course, it's possible she's only being diplomatic, considering some of Bush's past appointees—like Utah shopping mall developer John Price, best known for being sued for unscrupulous business practices before being named Ambassador to Mauritius, and Nancy Brinker, Ambassador to Sweden and wife of creator of Bennigan's. Still, Bushnell treats all comers equally. "It really doesn't matter whether you're career or non-career," says Bushnell. "[The job] is absolutely unique."

Justin Peters is a *Washington Monthly* editorial fellow.

The young man came back. "No-go," he said. His boss wouldn't talk. He walked me out. Why were they all here? "The FEC auditors," he said. "They arrive in a month," he said.

By law, the Federal Election Commission audits every federal campaign. And so shortly after the last vote is counted, the FEC moves in to start counting pennies. Win or lose, every campaign, including those that didn't make it out of the primaries, must maintain a skeleton staff to provide the FEC with the documents it requests. You don't just flip the FEC an accounting register and your cell phone number and tell them to call with any questions. Audits can take two to three years to complete, and someone needs to be there to turn out the lights when the last auditor leaves.

What must it be like to continue working for a campaign that has already lost? I called Keri Adams, now vice president of Community Affairs with Planned Parenthood in Tennessee. She had been in charge of the budget for media and polling expenses during the Gore campaign in Nashville. Just after the election, while the recount was still underway in Florida, she was asked to move to Washington and staff the audit.

"The first thing you need to do is liquidate the campaign's assets. Computers, furniture, cellphones," she said. This, I thought, explained the cellphones and satellite TV receivers I saw at the Kerry campaign office. "It was a strange, eerie feeling. It's almost like you're packing up for someone who's died.

"Then you have to prepare for the auditors. They're going to go through every check, every credit card bill, every cash receipt. I spent days creating the most elaborate spread sheets of phone bills you ever saw.

"When the FEC auditors arrived, we were told not to have any contact with them. We were told specifically to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

keep our distance, and I remember the words, 'lest they manipulate us.' Our instructions were to be friendly in elevator situations. They weren't supposed to have even known our names, but the auditors were in our office every day. The most awkward thing was trying not to have a relationship—even an acrimonious relationship—with someone who you would see every day. Your bosses plant the suspicion in your mind: They might try to manipulate you—and immediately, the armor's up.

"Basically, you wait for the auditors to ask for something, and then you provide it. Because we weren't allowed to have contact, we had a contact person. All the FEC requests would go through her. She would come to us and say, 'they're looking for this document or this check.' And so we would go through this long row of file cabinets filled with sequentially ordered checks for the 100th time looking for the one check out of sequence, because that's the one the FEC wants.

"There were stretches when things were busy, but there was also a lot of downtime and a lot of boredom. One of the lawyers on the campaign made it through three *Harry Potter* novels in what seemed like one week. Fortunately, because of some strange cable-TV package, we had access to all the movie channels. We tried to get rid of them. All we wanted were the news channels, but they were [sold as] a set. It definitely added to the absurdity. Once, a colleague and I were watching *My Dog Spot*, and our boss came in to ask us a question. We actually held up our hands and said, 'Wait, wait, wait. Wait until this scene is finished.' And he waited. And how many damn times did I see *Gladiator* that year?"

Why would anyone sign on for such a job, I asked. No question took her longer to answer. "A smart person would have said, 'I'm going to stay in Nashville and make a life for myself.' But a smart person wouldn't be working on a campaign in the first place. There was morbid curiosity, of course. But I joined the campaign in the first place, I guess, because I wanted to be a part of something historic. After the election, even though the campaign was over and we had lost, it was still the chance to be a part of something that historians would be talking about for decades. That's kind of sad, in retrospect. It was, after all, just an audit.

"There weren't a lot of individual moments of job satisfaction," she recalls. "If you think audits are fun, then there are 1,000 thrilling moments. But, when I found out that the division I oversaw in Nashville was finished and passed the audit, that was very gratifying. We weren't fined. I knew that my department, what I was doing, was clear and clean. Knowing that I, at least, had done a good job, that was my job satisfaction. Accountants are special people, there's no way around it."

Daniel Franklin is a *Washington Monthly* consulting editor.

Democrats used to want a new JFK. Now, they're hunting for the next Newt Gingrich—the politician with a roadmap back to power.

NEWT-O-METER

	Upside	Downside	Rating
Harry Reid	Enough back-room smarts to hold together the Democratic Caucus.	Not enough front-room charisma to hold the attention of a garden gnome.	
Howard Dean	Already familiar to most Americans.	Yeah, that's because of...well, you know.	
Nancy Pelosi	Pioneered the creation of the Democrats' own Contract with America.	It was a mess of policy-wonk speak and shout-outs to interest groups that was rightly ignored.	
Barack Obama	Those eyes, that smile, that voice. Tell us again about One America, Barack.	Freshmen senators are supposed to be seen and not heard.	
Dick Durbin	The Senate's smartest Democrat, with a tongue half acid, half honey.	Already known as Illinois' *other* senator.	
Rahm Emanuel	Blisteringly smart, ambitious, unconcerned if people think he's a jerk.	A *little too* unconcerned if people think he's a jerk.	
Henry Waxman	His must-read reports on GOP abuses have taken the sheen off the Republican Party's reputation.	He's the congressman from Beverly Hills.	

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Postmodern Protests

Why modern marches matter only to those who march.

By Christina Larson

On a blisteringly cold Inauguration Day, an assortment of liberal women's groups gathered to stage a counter-inaugural protest in Dupont Circle, three miles out of sight and earshot from the president's swearing-in on Capitol Hill. A few hundred marchers stood in the snow to mourn the "death" of 11 civil liberties, each symbolized by a cardboard coffin draped with an American flag. Wearing what was apparently the standard uniform of protest—a North Face jacket, wool scarf, and duck boots—the protesters chanted about Social Security fraud and an unjust war in Iraq before forming a boisterous procession down an unusually deserted Connecticut Avenue. Many carried hand-painted signs, but the tiny handful of spectators—a half-dozen shopkeepers who momentarily stopped to watch—had to squint to read them; sticks to hold the signs had been defined as security threats and were prohibited along the parade route.

The march halted in McPherson Square, a downtown park where several different counter-inaugural marches were to coalesce that afternoon for a further round of rousing speeches. While they waited for the others to arrive, one of the organizers, Sarah Long, declared the morning's "Women's March and Funeral Procession" protest a success. "I think we had a great turnout; we looked good ... the coffins were all in order ... Today is a small victory for us."

Victory might seem an odd word choice, considering that the day's counter-inaugural protests were relatively isolated events in a city celebrating the reelection of George W. Bush and larger Republican majorities in both houses of Congress. But in the self-referential world of modern protests, Long was correct. As with most demonstrations today, the march wasn't planned to accomplish a concrete result by demanding the passage of a particular piece of legislation. Instead, its organizers had focused largely on two things: affirming the protesters' *right* to protest, and enriching their *experience* of the protest. While in the past a march was judged successful if it affected a political outcome, today's protests are judged on how they affect a protester's sense of self.

Christina Larson is the managing editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

Petitions in boots

The first march on Washington took place in the midst of an economic depression in 1894 when populist leader Joseph Coxey led an army of 500 jobless men to the Capitol steps to demand a public works program that would provide jobs for the unemployed. (Coxey was carted off by police before finishing his speech.) Two decades later, in what must have been the first counter-inaugural protest, 28-year-old Alice Paul organized 8,000 women wearing white to march down Pennsylvania Avenue a day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. The women were there to lobby for women's suffrage, a demonstration that was rewarded by the passage a few years later of a constitutional amendment giving women

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the right to vote. In 1941, the mere threat of a public protest was enough to force political change: When A. Philip Randolph, leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, announced plans for a march on Washington, Franklin Roosevelt issued an executive order banning discrimination in defense industry and federal jobs. And the granddaddy of all protests, the March on Washington in 1963, drew a quarter million people to the foot of the Lincoln Memorial to demand voting protections and desegregation of public spaces; shortly thereafter, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

From women's suffrage to Civil Rights, marches helped to change both minds and laws.

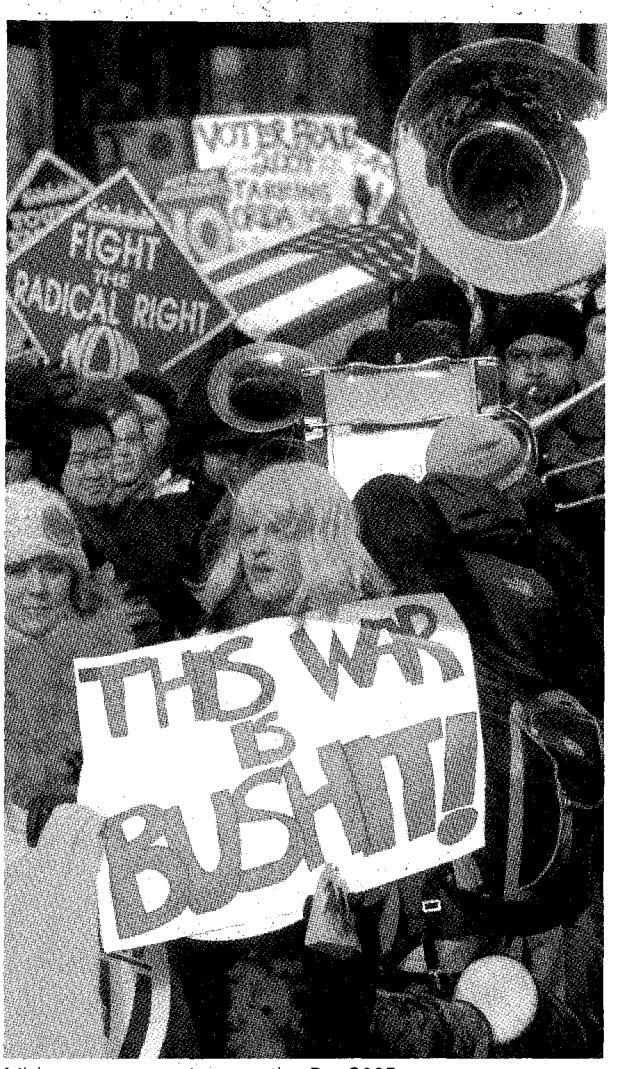
Hulton Historical Images

Protests and marches in Washington and elsewhere—including demonstrations against the Vietnam War outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago—continued throughout the 1960s and into the next few decades. But as various advocacy groups and social movements became institutionalized, setting up shop in Washington and hiring staff, the use of protest marches as a strategic tool became less common. In the new world of professional advocacy, the National Organization of Women and Greenpeace turned not to direct action but direct mail to achieve their goals. Even the biggest marches—such as those against apartheid or the Reagan administration's policies in Central America—drew relatively small crowds and scant press attention.

In 1995, the Million Man March brought marches back onto the national stage in a dramatic way. The first event of that scale organized in decades, the demonstration drew nearly one million African-American men and boys to Washington. Many federal workers stayed home in anticipation of disruptive protests. But a funny thing happened. The marchers hadn't come to demand passage of a legislative agenda or to bring pressure to bear on national politicians. Instead, they had gathered to make a promise to themselves—and to each other—to improve their lives and their families. The men crowded shoulder-to-shoulder along the Mall and recited a 10-tier pledge about fatherhood and responsibility, and listened to exhortations from the likes of Maya Angelou, Jesse Jackson, Stevie Wonder, and Rosa Parks. Even a bizarre, two-hour, veering-into-numerology speech by the event's organizer Louis Farrakhan couldn't dampen the mood.

The press didn't quite know what to make of the Million Man March—there was no precedent for a march designed primarily to allow participants to encounter each other and pledge life change—so media coverage focused largely on the sheer number of marchers and on Farrakhan's loopiness. What they missed was the fact that the Million Man March was creating a model for a new type of demonstration. Most of the copycat march-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Mixing messages on Inauguration Day 2005

es since, including the Million Mom March, the Million Family March, and the Million Worker March, have had something of the same flavor. Even if they were ostensibly focused on a specific policy goal—and many don't even pretend to have that impetus—organizers have crafted marches to be fulfilling experiences for those who come to participate. Any impact on those outside the march seems to be an afterthought.

I march, therefore I am

Perhaps the epitome of this new kind of demonstration was the March for Women's Lives, which took place on the Mall in April 2004. Organized by a coalition of women's groups including NOW and the Feminist Majority, the march was intended not to advocate new laws but to show support for old ones. If you wandered among the protesters for a few minutes, however, it was clear that the real purpose of the march was to promote girl (and the occasional boy) power.

Mothers drove with their daughters for hours to share the experience of the march and their own histories in a way that doesn't happen during most carpool rides or trips to the shopping malls. Groups of college friends flew in from all corners of the country to use the event as a mini-reunion, converging on the Mall with shrieks and hugs. Along the side of the march route, three generations of women—a mother, daughter, and grandmother—held up signs proclaiming their family's support for a woman's right to choose. Everywhere you looked, women in pink T-shirts were high-fiving and using their "Pro-Choice, Pro-Family" circular signs as Frisbees. It was often hard to hear the event's speakers over the chatter inside the march (given the off-key crooning of a few folk singers, that might have been a blessing), but it hardly mattered.

That's because the show on the Mall, while officially the main event, was just one part of the weekend's activities. On that Saturday afternoon, tables lined Dupont Circle manned by women's groups that were distributing informational fliers about their organizations and giving away (or selling) bumper stickers, pins, hats, and other souvenirs. If you've ever been to a trade conference and watched sparkplug wholesalers wandering around with free T-shirts pulled over their button-downs and goody bags over their arms, you'd recognize the same "Oooh…it's free" response among marchers. Many other demonstrations now stretch over three or four days, involving training workshops and after-hours events, opportunities to deepen knowledge, develop networks, and polish the craft of protesting.

The counter-inaugural protests had a similar trade-show feel. Protesters had come to voice outrage at George W. Bush, but also to see old friends, network, and, as one twenty-something woman put it, "Get myself back into action." At their convenience, they could drop by the "Convergence Center"—several rented rooms (above a record store) that included meeting rooms, art room (stocked with supplies for posters and puppet-making), computer room with Internet access, kitchen, and children's playroom. Activities ran from Monday through Sunday, giving the out-of-town demonstrator plenty of pick-a-protest opportunities, from workshops on "nonviolent direct action" to dancing at the "Punk Rock Counter-Inaugural Ball."

Perhaps in an age when blogs have given average people the pundit's power to bring down network anchors and Senate leaders and shape the nation's political agenda, dissenting Americans no longer need protests and marches to be heard. Yet there remains among many a need for something more—to have an adventure, to experience an historic event, to make direct connections with like-minded people. This existential desire, plus a certain nostalgia for the good old days, fuel much of contemporary march culture. Which is fine: Protesting for protesting's sake serves a market. But so do rock concerts and tractor pulls. If today's marchers want their efforts to mean a great deal more than that, they would do well to recognize the real reason why the marches of yesteryear are remembered. It wasn't just about the messengers. It was about the message. ◆

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Is Grover Over?

Norquist's anti-tax jihad stumbles in the states.

By Daniel Franklin and A.G. Newmyer III

If ever two men seemed to share one political soul, surely they were Grover Norquist and Mitch Daniels. From his perch as president of Americans for Tax Reform, Norquist was the architect of President Bush's strategy to cut taxes every year and has elicited signed promises from virtually every congressional Republican never to vote for a tax hike. Norquist once famously boasted that he hoped to "reduce [government] to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub." During Bush's first term, it was Daniels, the White House budget director, who began running the water. During his time in the White House, Daniels conceded nothing in arguing for the president's tax cuts, even going so far as suggesting that the president's trillion-dollar tax cut represented "our best chance of another unexpected surplus." So if the smile on Norquist's face seemed extra-wide on Election Day, even considering the Republicans' reinforced grip on Washington power, it might have had something to do with Daniels's election as governor of Indiana. Daniels was bringing Grover's jihad back to the Heartland.

Where he promptly dropped it. Daniels had campaigned touting citations from Norquist's ATR and other anti-tax groups. But eight short days after settling into the Indiana Statehouse, Daniels proposed a budget that sought to close a $600 million budget gap by socking high-income Hoosiers with a 29-percent increase in income tax. Norquist quickly accused his old cohort of "betraying" taxpayers with his budget proposal. "This is the fastest any governor claiming to be a Reagan Republican has folded under the pressure of the big-spending interests," Norquist said. Daniels was stung. "Two years ago, Grover was giving me the Hero of the American Taxpayer Award," Daniels lamented to the *Indianapolis Star*. "I'm the same guy I was then."

To bring pressure on the apostate, Norquist publicly and negatively compared him to other governors who he said hewed more closely to the doctrine that taxes can go in only one direction: down. "On behalf of Indiana's families and businesses," Norquist wrote Indiana state legislators, "I urge you to prevent Gov. Daniels from closing Indiana for business, and turn to people like [Texas] Gov. Rick Perry ... for alternative solutions." But just four days later, it was Perry's turn to break Norquist's heart. Introducing a new tax program to the Texas Association of Businesses, Perry said Texas had a "once in a generation opportunity...to put in place an educational system to really impact our children and our children's children."

Poor Grover. Nearly everywhere he looks, it seems, a Republican governor or legislature is finding the seductions of tax hikes too powerful to resist in the face of reduced federal support and soaring education and health-care costs. Anti-tax groups such as ATR, the Club for Growth, Americans for Prosperity, and FreedomWorks seem to have feet-on-the-desk privileges in the White House and Republican Congress. For a time, they appeared to have even more pull in the states, where

Daniel Franklin is a *Washington Monthly* consulting editor.
A. G. Newmyer III is managing director of U.S. Fiduciary Advisors.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1,200 of 7,400 state legislators have signed Norquist's pledge never to vote for a tax increase. Anti-tax advocates are quick to threaten political death to any Republican who strays from the no-tax gospel. But with the red ink still flowing, even after collectively closing more than $200 billion in budget shortfalls over the last three years, cracks are forming within the no-tax coalition. Governors are finding that they can't cut more without endangering programs that hit people where they live—such programs as road construction, nursing home assistance, and reading, writing and arithmetic lessons. Surprisingly, legislatures are going along. Indeed, the day after Norquist announced his opposition to Daniels's budget plan, the Republican chairmen of the Indiana House Ways and Means and Senate Budget committees admitted that they didn't consider the no-tax pledges they had given the ATR binding because they signed them years before they acquired their current budget responsibilities. Another Republican Hoosier lawmaker complained to *The Indianapolis Star*, "I knew it [ATR's no-tax pledge] was like a marriage when I signed it, but now I want a divorce."

It was not always thus. In the early '90s, state Republican parties rode the anti-tax backlash to power, going from controlling five statehouses in 1992 to 20 today. (Democrats and Republicans split control of ten others.) A big reason why was the fundraising and organizational help offered from national anti-tax groups. "You can not discount the impact of Grover Norquist and Americans for Tax Reform and the Club for Growth," says Bill Pound, executive director of the National Conference of State Legislatures, the main umbrella group for state lawmakers. "To their credit, they have had considerable effect." And indeed, many a Republican statehouse still keeps a light on for Norquist and his Washington friends. ATR and others have helped beat back major tax increase proposals from Alabama and Arkansas to Oregon and Washington in recent years.

Lost among press stories heralding the Republicans' victories in the presidential and Congressional elections, however, is evidence that the tide may be turning. Voters in November rejected every tax-limitation measure on state ballots, including a Maine property tax initiative that was the most ambitious of its kind in 20 years. Voters in several other states, meanwhile, approved tax increases to pay for specific programs such as schools, roads and mental health. States have not exactly gone on a spending spree—they've cut spending much more than they've raised taxes over their last few years of budget difficulties—but because they are under so much pressure, they are increasingly resistant to the ministrations of Norquist and others who are telling them to cut taxes even more.

No state demonstrates the rise and wobble of the anti-tax movement better than Colorado. In 1992, at the instigation of Douglas Bruce, now a county commissioner in Colorado Springs, Colorado voters passed a referendum known as the Taxpayers Bill of Rights, or TABOR which attached an amendment to the state constitution that required any tax increase to be approved by a vote of the people and limits state spending increases to inflation, with adjustments made for population growth. Any amount that the state collects above its spending limit has to be returned as a tax refund, unless the public specifically votes to allow the state to keep the money. So far, no Colorado official has even tried to bring the question to a vote. "It sounds good, so it's hard to fight politically," says Brad Young, the former Republican chairman of Colorado's joint budget committee.

TABOR has completely warped Colorado politics ever since. One of the original supporters was a little-known state representative from Aurora named Bill Owens. Six years later, Owens was elected to be Colorado's first Republican governor in 24 years. It wasn't long before national Republicans began to notice. *National Review* named him "America's Best Governor" in 2002 and admiringly listed his government-cutting bona fides. Anti-tax advocates began touting TABOR as a national model and Owens as a potential presidential candidate for 2008.

But while Colorado has been terrific for TABOR, TABOR has been a nightmare for Colorado, and for Colorado Republicans in particular. The state budget was fine as long as the state's economy was growing, and bills could be pushed into the following year. Once things slowed down, retrenchment became a serious business just as health care and education expenses began to shoot upwards. Thanks to TABOR, the state can't increase its spending on roads and other expenditures it's been putting off. Now, Gov. Owens himself has proposed a ballot measure to curtail some of the law's limits.

Business is the chisel driving a crack between moderate Republicans and the anti-tax fanatics. Although there is no group in Washington more loyal to the GOP's anti-tax doctrine than the Chamber of Commerce, in the states, reality often trumps ideology. "For businesses to be successful, you need roads and you need higher education, both of which have gotten worse under TABOR and will continue to get worse," says Tom Clark of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, who notes that higher education has shrunk from 25 percent of the state budget in 1995 to about 10 percent today. "I'm a Republican," Clark says, "but I made the decision not to give any money to the state party."

Throughout the state, moderate businessmen such as Clark kept their political checkbooks closed to many Republicans last year. Several statehouse incumbents who might otherwise have counted on huge campaign spending advantages over Democratic challengers instead faced something approaching parity. A tightly organized state Democratic Party was able to take

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One Republican Indiana legislator said of ATR's no-tax pledge: "I knew it was like a marriage when I signed it, but now I want a divorce."

advantage, knocking off enough Republican incumbents to gain control of the Colorado legislature for the first time in 40 years. Democratic leaders in the state legislature are now reaching out to moderate Republicans to make changes to TABOR. As for Owens, he's term-limited and preparing to begin his last two years as governor. With a reinvigorated Democratic majority in the statehouse and a conservative base disappointed with his concessions to budget realities, he's quacking lamely. TABOR is at no risk of being jettisoned altogether, but its reputation as the third rail of Colorado politics has taken a permanent hit, as have Owens's hopes for competing in the GOP presidential primary 2008.

The fight now moves to Virginia, where, last year, business groups helped enact the state's largest tax increase since 1966. Democratic Gov. Mark Warner conceded he might be "a lunatic" for trying to reform his state's tax system. He had run on a no-tax pledge, but recanted after finding that the state's fiscal hole was deeper than he could fill. He spent his first two years in office slicing spending by $6 billion, but finally concluded that the state would continue to bleed red even if the economy grew by higher than historic rates. The state would be facing deficits through 2010, just funding current programs. So Warner proposed raising taxes by $1.1 billion by offering tax breaks to most people but raising a number of rates, such as sales and cigarette taxes, and closing up some of the most gaping loopholes. Republican lawmakers began sharpening their knives until they realized that many of their constituents, business groups among them, were squarely behind the Democratic governor. Over the howls from national anti-tax groups, Virginia Republicans actually outdid the governor's tax hike, increasing it by an additional $700 million, fully two-thirds larger than Warner's proposal.

Norquist and the Club for Growth have vowed to defeat dozens of Republican legislators who supported the tax hike, dubbing them "Virginia's Least Wanted." "We had a bunch of worthless Republicans in the Senate who have been there forever and don't have any core free market beliefs," complained Club for Growth then-President Stephen Moore in an online chat. "They sold us out and then enough Benedict Arnold Republicans in the House went along. The good news is that these Republicans are through politically—we will be sure of that."

Two years ago, anti-tax groups made good on earlier threats to target legislators who referred regional sales tax hikes to voters, unseating the House transportation committee chair. But there is a different mood in Richmond. John Chichester, the Republican president pro tempore of the Virginia Senate who steered the tax hike through as finance chairman, calls Norquist and Moore "generals without armies.... The Norquist crowd—if they had a flame burning someplace, it's dimming now. The shrillness and strident rhetoric probably did their cause more harm than good."

As in Colorado, business groups have already come to the financial and organizational aid of the apostates facing challengers in this June's primaries. "The 17 members of the Republican House majority who voted for the modest tax increases demonstrated statesmanship and political courage in the old-fashioned sense," says Hugh Keogh, president of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce. "We'll do whatever seems to make sense to help encourage their reelection."

Given that kind of support from business interests, which have formed a new PAC specifically designed to help Republican lawmakers who supported Warner's tax increases, coupled with the fact that the moderate Republicans are mostly well established and well-liked in their districts—it may be difficult for Norquist and Moore to dislodge very many of them. "No doubt, Norquist and his allies can bring some money in on the other side," says University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato. "But to beat the legislators, he'll have to find strong opponents, always tough with established incumbents; catch the incumbents napping, which they aren't; and significantly outspend them, which I doubt he can do... In some competitive districts, Norquist's efforts might elect Democrats in the fall."

It is a bizarre notion when set against Norquist's outsized reputation as the preeminent Washington conservative powerbroker. But with Colorado looking shaky for Republicans and Daniels launching his administration with a direct slap to the anti-tax crowd, Virginia's statewide elections later this year loom large. If "Virginia's Least Wanted" survive their primary challenges or Democrats pick up seats in November's statewide election, Norquist and the anti-tax movement's threats could carry significantly less sting in the 2006 midterms nationwide. Grover is a long way from being politically neutered, to be sure. But it is in the nation's capital, rather than the states, that he continues to find his soulmates. From statehouse Republicans, such as his former friend Daniels, Norquist keeps hearing heresies. "Many other states have cut education spending—I didn't want to do that," Daniels said. "Many have cut higher education spending—I didn't want to do that." But weep not for Norquist and Daniels. They'll always have Washington. ◆

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Case for The Draft

By Phillip Carter
& Paul Glastris

America can remain the world's superpower.
Or it can maintain its current all-volunteer military.
It can't do both.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The United States has occupied many foreign lands over the last half century—Germany and Japan in World War II, and, on a much smaller scale, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo in the 1990s. In all these cases, we sponsored elections and handed-off to democratic governments control of countries that were relatively stable, secure, and reasonably peaceful.

In Iraq, we failed to do this, despite heroic efforts by U.S. and coalition troops. The newly-elected Iraqi government inherits a country in which assassinations, kidnappings, suicide bombings, pipeline sabotages, and beheadings of foreigners are daily occurrences. For the last eight months, the ranks of the insurgency have been growing faster than those of the security forces of the provisional Iraqi government—and an alarming number of those government forces are secretly working for the insurgency. American-led combat operations in Ramadi and Fallujah killed large numbers of the enemy, but at the price of fanning the flames of anti-American hatred and dispersing the insurrection throughout Iraq. Despite nearly two years of effort, American troops and civilian administrators have failed to restore basic services to much of the central part of the country where a majority of Iraqis live. The U.S. military has not even been able to secure the 7-mile stretch of highway leading from the Baghdad airport to the Green Zone where America's own embassy and the seat of the Iraqi government are headquartered.

How we got to this point is by now quite obvious. Even many of the war's strongest supporters admit that the Bush administration grievously miscalculated by invading Iraq with too few troops and then by stubbornly refusing to augment troop numbers as the country descended into violent mayhem after the fall of Saddam.

This analysis, of course, presumes that it was ever possible to invade and quickly pacify Iraq, given the country's religious-ethnic divisions and history of tyranny. But it also presumes that the fault is primarily one of judgment: that the president and key senior military officials made a mistake by accepting Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's theory that a "transformed" American military can prevail in war without great masses of ground troops. That judgment was indeed foolish; events have shown that, while a relatively modest American force can win a stunning battlefield victory, such a force is not enough to secure the peace.

But there's a deeper problem, one that any president who chose to invade a country the size of Iraq would have faced. In short, America's all-volunteer military simply cannot deploy and sustain enough troops to succeed in places like Iraq while still deterring threats elsewhere in the world. Simply adding more soldiers to the active duty force, as some in Washington are now suggesting, may sound like a good solution. But it's not, for sound operational and pragmatic reasons. America doesn't need a bigger standing army; it needs a deep bench of trained soldiers held in reserve who can be mobilized to handle the unpredictable but inevitable wars and humanitarian interventions of the future. And while there are several ways the all-volunteer force can create some extra surge capacity, all of them are limited.

The only effective solution to the manpower crunch is the one America has turned to again and again in its history: the draft. Not the mass combat mobilizations of World War II, nor the inequitable conscription of Vietnam—for just as threats change and war-fighting advances, so too must the draft. A modernized draft would demand that the privileged participate. It would give all who serve a choice over how they serve. And it would provide the military, on a "just in time" basis, large numbers of deployable ground troops, particularly the peacekeepers we'll need to meet the security challenges of the 21st century.

America has a choice. It can be the world's superpower, or it can maintain the current all-volunteer military, but it probably can't do both.

Plowing a field with a Ferrari

Before the invasion of Iraq, Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki and Army Secretary Thomas White advised Rumsfeld that many more troops would be needed to secure Iraq (something on the order of 250,000 to 300,000). Secretary of State Colin Powell, whose State Department was shut out of the post-war planning process, also privately argued for a bigger force. A RAND Corporation analysis, published in summer 2003, offered a range of estimates for what size force would be necessary in Iraq. Using troops-to-population ratios from previous occupations, RAND projected that, two years after the invasion, it would take anywhere from 258,000 troops (the Bosnia model), to 321,000 (post-World War II Germany), to 526,000 (Kosovo) to secure the peace.

None of these figures seems, at first glance, unachievable for a U.S. military comprised of 1.4 million active-duty troops, 870,900 reservists, and 110,000 individual ready reservists (soldiers who have served their tour of duty and are not training with the reserves but who can by statute still be called up for service). And yet an Iraq deployment that has never exceeded 153,000 ground personnel has put so

Phillip Carter is an attorney and former Army captain who writes on national security issues for *The Washington Monthly*. **Paul Glastris** is the editor in chief of *The Washington Monthly*.

Photo by Carl Iseli

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

much stress on the military that a senior Army Reserve official has candidly stated that current rotation policies will lead to a "broken force." How can that be?

To answer that question, begin by deducting virtually the entire Navy and Air Force from the head count; the Iraq occupation has been almost exclusively a ground game, hence an Army and Marine operation. Next, consider that the United States sends into combat not individual soldiers but units, complete with unit equipment sets, unit leaders, and an organizational structure that facilitates command, control, and logistical support. So instead of counting individual soldiers—a meaningless exercise—one must look at how many *units* the United States could theoretically put on the ground if it wanted to mobilize every active and reserve soldier available. And if you do that, you come to a figure of roughly 600,000 troops. That's the total number of deployable soldiers that the United States could theoretically have called upon to man the initial invasion.

In practice, however, the Pentagon would never have sent that many troops to Iraq, for good reasons: It would have left the defense cupboard bare and served as an open invitation to America's enemies to make trouble elsewhere in the world. Massing a 600,000 force would have meant not only pulling nearly all front-line troops out of Korea, but also mobilizing the poorly-resourced divisions of the National Guard, the third-string crew that the president can call on when the first string (active troops) and the second string (the Guard's elite "enhanced" reserve brigades) are depleted.

Given the need to hold troops in reserve for deterrence purposes, the Pentagon had perhaps 400,000 troops available for the invasion. Yet that number includes many troops in specialized fields that are of little or no use in desert warfare or peacekeeping—off-loading equipment in sea ports, for instance. Such troops could have been reshaped into provisional infantry units, as the Army has done with artillery and air-defense formations, but that would've taken time. The number of troops with units that would actually have been of use in Iraq was probably closer to the figures that Gen. Shinseki and Secretary White have suggested: 250,000 to 300,000—in other words, the lower end of what RAND estimated would be required for success.

But even that number is deceptive. It is the size of the force that could have been initially sent into Iraq, not the number that could have realistically been *sustained* there. Because so many soldiers in the all-volunteer military are married with families (compared to conscript armies), and because soldiers must periodically be induced or persuaded to voluntarily reenlist, the Pentagon must rotate its forces in and out of theater every 12 months or so in order to maintain morale and reenlistment. Thus, just as a civilian police department must hire three to four police officers for every one cop on the beat, so too must the U.S. military have three to four soldiers for every one serving in Iraq.

The Pentagon, then, could have realistically kept those initial 250,000 to 300,000 troops in place only for a limited time—perhaps a year, certainly not more than two. That might have been enough time to pacify the country, especially if higher troop numbers at the outset would have quelled the early looting and disorder. Then again, a year or two might not have been sufficient time to beat back an insurgency which, we now know, was to some extent planned in advance of the invasion. In that case, keeping 250,000 to 300,000 troops in Iraq for two years or longer would have risked so lowering morale and reenlistment rates as to destroy the all-volunteer force. It would have been like plowing a field with a Ferrari; it could have been done, but only once.

Taking the need for rotations into account, then, the U.S. military can comfortably handle something like 80,000 troops in Iraq at any one time. The actual number on the ground has averaged 133,286 for the last two years, and more than 150,000 soldiers are in Iraq now.

That's a woefully insufficient number for the task. Yet it is pushing the outside limits of what the current force structure can handle. It has meant imposing "stop-loss" emergency measures to prevent soldiers from exiting the service. It has required deploying nearly every active-duty brigade, including one previously committed elsewhere in Korea. It has meant raiding the seed corn of military readiness by deploying the Army's elite "opposing force" training units—seasoned soldiers who play the enemy in mock exercises to build the skills of greener troops before they are sent into battle. It has necessitated calling up all 15 of the National Guard's enhanced readiness brigades, as well as poorly-resourced National Guard divisions that have not been mobilized *en masse* since the Korean War. It has led the Army Reserve Chief Lt. Gen. James Helmly to write in a recent memo that the Reserve will be unable to meet its commitments without substantial use of the Army's *involuntary* mobilization authorities under federal law. As of Dec. 15, 2004, the Army Reserve retained just 37,515 deployable soldiers out of a total of 200,366—almost no cushion at all. And in the final two months of last year, the Reserves missed their enlistment targets last year by 30 percent—a sign of even greater problems to come.

All this for a war that most planners consider to be a medium-sized conflict—nothing like what the United States faced in World War I, World War II, or the Cold War. And while threats of that magnitude aren't anywhere on the horizon, there are plenty of quite possible scenarios that could quickly overwhelm us—an implosion of the North Korean regime, a Chinese attack on Taiwan, worsening of the ethnic cleansing in the Sudan, or some unforeseen humanitarian nightmare. Already we have signaled to bad actors everywhere the limits of our power. Military threats might never have convinced the Iranians to give up their nuclear program. But it's more than a little troubling that ruling Iranian mullahs can publicly and credibly dismiss recent administration saber-rattling by pointing to the fact that our forces are pinned down in Iraq.

Stress test

Every 20 years or so for the past century, America has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The ability to deploy large numbers of troops overseas for long periods of time has been the price of America's superpower status. What we're learning from Iraq is that the all-volunteer force, as presently built, cannot do that—indeed, it was consciously designed to be incapable of such deployments.

found it necessary, for national security reasons, to send at least half a million troops overseas into harm's way, and to keep them there for years at a time. It did so in World War I, sending 4.1 million doughboys and Marines to Europe. In World War II, it mobilized 16 million for the war effort. America sent more than 3 million grunts to fight in Korea against the North Koreans and Chinese, in the first hot war of the Cold War. It rotated 5.1 million soldiers and Marines through Vietnam over a decade, with 543,400 stationed there at the height of that war in April 1969. And more recently, America sent 550,000 ground troops to eject Saddam's forces from Kuwait, as part of a ground force which totaled 831,500 with allied contributions from dozens of nations. Along the way, the United States military simultaneously fought small wars in Greece, Lebanon, El Salvador, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, requiring the commitment of thousands more. This ability to deploy large numbers of troops overseas for long periods of time has been the price of America's superpower status—what President John Kennedy alluded to in his inaugural address when he said America would bear any burden to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

There's no reason to think that America will be exempt from paying that price in the future. Even those who don't support the Bush policy of using unilateral force to democratize the Middle East (and we don't), and who prefer to work through military alliances whenever possible (and we do), should understand the need to increase American troop strength. The international community failed to act in Rwanda largely because the United States chose not to send troops; our NATO allies sent soldiers into Bosnia and Kosovo only because we put substantial numbers of ours in, too. The same will hold true for just about any other major war or humanitarian intervention in the future.

What we're increasingly learning from Iraq is that the all-volunteer force, as presently built, cannot do that—indeed, it was consciously designed to be incapable of such deployments. Today's force was built for precisely the kinds of wars that Caspar Weinberger and Colin Powell envisioned in their doctrines: wars with explicit purposes, narrow parameters, and clear exit strategies. In other words, it was built for the kinds of wars the military prefers to fight, not necessarily the kinds of wars we have, as a nation, historically fought.

The evolution of this force owes much to Vietnam. After that war ended, the nation's senior generals devised a military structure called the "total force" concept to circumvent two of the great moral hazards they identified with Vietnam: the failure to mobilize the nation, with all of its strata and segments, for the war; and the reliance on young American conscripts, who were coerced by the state to kill or be killed.

Vietnam had been fought almost entirely by active-duty volunteers and conscripts. A great number of young men, including many from the nation's privileged classes, sought refuge in the reserves as a way out of duty in Vietnam. The total force concept entailed, first of all, the splitting of key war-fighting and support functions. Henceforth, active-duty troops would perform nearly all the traditional combat roles; reservists would provide most of the support functions, such as logistics and military policing. This ensured that future wars could not be fought without the heavy involvement of the reserves. Army Gen. Creighton Abrams and other leaders felt that this would be a check on the power of presidents to go to war because mass reserve call-ups typically require a great deal of political capital.

Second, Pentagon leaders replaced the conscripted military with an all-volunteer force that would recruit enlistees with pay and benefits like the civilian world. This all-volunteer model, they believed, would improve morale for the simple reason that all soldiers would be in the service by choice. It would also improve military effectiveness because if soldiers could be lured to stay longer by reenlisting, they could acquire higher levels of skill. The mantra of the new military became "send a bullet, not a man"; the modern American military came to embrace precision firepower over manpower in what historian Russell Weigley called the "American way of war."

This all-volunteer military made good on nearly all these promises. After a rough period in the late 1970s, the U.S. military emerged a leaner, better force in the 1980s, proving itself in the small wars of that decade—Grenada, Libya, and Panama. Then came the first Gulf War—the apothesis of the all-volunteer, total force model. Coming off the Cold War, the Army had 18 divisions on active duty, in comparison to 10 today, and had little in the way of a pressing commission with the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union. By mobilizing seven of these Army divisions and two Marine divisions, in addition to the reserves and ready reserves, military leaders were able to send half a million troops to the Saudi desert. But because that war lasted just months, largely due to U.S. reluctance to invade and occupy Iraq, the system worked. Active-duty soldiers deployed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for less than a year, without fear of immediately being sent back to fight; reservists were similarly tapped just once. Desert Storm did not break the all-volunteer force because that war was precisely the kind that the force had been designed to fight: a limited campaign for limited ends, of limited duration, and with a defined exit strategy.

Unfortunately, national security threats don't always conform to the military's precise specifications. The 1990s brought two wars, in Bosnia and Kosovo, requiring the long-term commitment of U.S. troops for peacekeeping. These were relatively modest-sized deployments. Yet the military leadership complained that they put undo stress on the system, and, indeed, then-Gov. George Bush lambasted the Clinton administration in 2000 for the way it managed military readiness, charging that the Kosovo war put two of the Army's 10 divisions out of action, hurting the nation's ability to respond to threats abroad. In the wake of September 11, the U.S. military mobilized tens of thousands of reservists for homeland security and sent thousands of elite infantrymen and special forces into the mountains of Afghanistan; neither mission conformed to the model of past wars.

Then came Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the real stress test began.

Five bad options

In theory, there are several ways to get out of the military manpower bind we find ourselves in. In reality, there are inherent limits to almost all of them.

The first option—at least the one Democrats and moderate Republicans have talked most about—is to convince other countries to share the burden in Iraq. But that's not likely. Even if the security situation in Iraq improves and the Bush administration begins to share decision-making—something it's so far refused to do—European leaders would be extremely wary of trying to sell their citizens on sending troops to keep the peace in a war they expressly opposed. It may be possible to convince the Europeans and other developed nations to be more willing to contribute troops the next time there's an international need. But that, as we've seen, will require more U.S. troops, not fewer. Nor should it be the policy of the United States to have to rely on other countries' troops. We must be prepared to intervene unilaterally if necessary.

A second solution to the manpower crisis would be to rely more on private military contractors, whose use has exploded in recent years. Currently, more than 40,000 government contractors are on duty in Iraq, working in myriad jobs from security to reconstruction. The advantage of using contractors is that they provide surge capacity; they are hired only for the duration of an engagement. But according to Peter W. Singer, a research fellow at the Brookings Institution, these private armies also create problems. First, all costs considered, they're not necessarily less expensive for the military. Second, private military contractors often compete with the military for personnel, so any growth in these contractors usually results in tension between military retention and contractor recruiting efforts. Third, contractors operate in a legal gray area where their financial and accounting activities are heavily regulated, but their operations are barely looked at. It's one thing to contract for truck drivers; it's another to hire contractors to guard Afghan President Hamid Karzai or work as interrogation linguists in the Abu Ghraib prison because the military has too few commandos or linguists in its own ranks. The military has probably already pushed the contractor concept about as far as it will go; expecting much more surge capacity from private industry is probably unrealistic.

A third possibility might be to follow the advice of several cutting-edge military reformers to radically transform today's military. According to these reformers, today's force was drawn up for a bygone age of massed superpower armies; it does not reflect today's threats. These visionaries would downsize the Navy, scrap some of the Army's mechanized divisions, and in these and other ways free up tens of thousands of troops to be redeployed into "soldier centric" units capable of doing everything along the spectrum from humanitarian relief in Banda Aceh to combat patrols in Baghdad. Under pressure from the Iraq mission, the military has taken some steps in this direction—for instance, by retraining and reequipping some army artillery and air defense units into military police units. But such moves have been incremental in nature thus far; the true scope of the problem is orders of magnitude larger than the Pentagon's current solution. And some day, a war may come which requires all kinds of combat power—from large land-based formations to ships capable of sailing through the Taiwan strait to legions of peacekeepers. The military cannot build additional capability simply by playing a shell game with its personnel; at some point, it must genuinely add more soldiers too, and in large numbers.

A fourth option, and the most obvious one, would be to simply increase the size of the active-duty force. This too has been discussed. During the 2004 campaign, Sen. John Kerry called for increasing the active-duty force by 40,000 troops. More recently, a bipartisan group of hawkish defense intellectuals published an open letter on *The Weekly Standard* Web site calling on Congress to add 25,000 ground troops each year for the next several years. And the Pentagon has announced some money for extra troops in the administration's latest budget. The problem with such proposals is that they underestimate both current manpower needs and the cost of forcing the all-volunteer military to grow.

In theory, one can always lure the next recruit, or retain the next soldier, by offering a marginally higher monetary incentive—but in reality, there are practical limits to such measures. The pool of people who might be convinced to join the Army is mainly comprised of healthy young people with high school degrees but no college plans. That pool is inherently limited, especially when the economy is heating up and there's a shooting war on. Last year, despite sign-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Art by Peter Kuper

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing bonuses in the tens of thousands and other perks, military recruiters had to lower entry standards to meet their enlistment goals. The active force met its recruiting targets for 2004, but the reserves have found themselves increasingly struggling to bring enough soldiers in the door.

But it's the long-term cost issues that most militate against making the all-volunteer force bigger. Generals today are fond of saying that you recruit a soldier, but you retain their families. One reason the Army has resisted Congress' attempts to raise its end strength is that it does not want to embrace all of the costs associated with permanently increasing the size of the military, because it sees each soldier as a 30-year commitment—both to the soldier and his (or her) family. According to the Congressional Budget Office, each soldier costs $99,000 per year—a figure which includes medical care, housing, and family benefits.

The United States does not necessarily need a massive standing military all the time. What it needs is a highly trained professional force of a certain size—what we have right now is fine—backed by a massive surge capacity of troops in reserve to quickly augment the active-duty force in times of emergency. Sure, right now, the Army is light several hundred thousand deployable ground troops. But over the long term, the demands of Iraq will subside, the need for troops will decline, and it could be another decade or two before another mission that big comes along.

The problem is that under the all-volunteer system it's hard to fix the short-term problem (too few troops now) without creating long-term problems (too many troops later). And so, paying for the salaries and benefits and families of 50,000 or 500,000 extra soldiers on active duty over the course of their careers doesn't, from a military standpoint, make sense. Politically, it would put the senior military leadership in the position of convincing the American people to keep military budgets extremely high to pay for a huge standing army that isn't being used and might not be for years. It might be possible now to convince the public to add another 100,000 soldiers (annual cost: about $10 billion in personnel costs alone, not including equipment and training). But the generals rightly worry that this support will evaporate after Iraq stabilizes. Indeed, Americans have a long tradition dating back to the writing of Constitution, of refusing to support a large standing military unless the need is apparent. (The public paid for a much bigger all-volunteer military in the 1970s and 1980s, but only because of the obvious need to deter a massive Soviet army from threatening Europe; after the Berlin Wall fell, both political parties supported big cuts in troop strength). What we really need is the capability to rapidly mobilize and deploy a half million troops to project U.S. power abroad, and to be able to sustain them indefinitely while maintaining a reserve with which to simultaneously engage other enemies.

A fifth option would be to build this surge capacity into the reserves, instead of the active force. Under this plan, which some military personnel planners are already discussing, the army would radically bump up enlistment bonuses and other incentives to lure vastly more young people directly into the reserves than are being recruited now. Such a plan would have the advantage of creating the surge capacity the nation needs without saddling the nation with a large, standing professional army. But the disadvantages are substantial, too. For such a plan to work, the military would have to make a commitment, which thus far it never has, to fix the legendary resources problems and anemic readiness of the reserves. A great many reservists have gone through the crucible of combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, and yet still cope with vehicles that lack armor, weapons older than they are, and a paucity of training dollars. Also, the army would always (and rightly) insist that signing bonuses for reservists be substantially below those offered by to active-duty recruits. And even if bonuses and other renumeration for both the active-duty and the reserves were to rise substantially, it is hard to see how the reserves could lure in a sufficient number of recruits without significantly lowering admissions standards. The real advantage of the all-volunteer force is its quality. If the military tries to recruit so many soldiers that it must substantially lower its entry requirements, then the all-volunteer force will lose its qualitative edge. This decrease in quality will have a cascade effect on discipline within the ranks, degrading combat effectiveness for these units.

A 21st-century draft

That leaves one option left for providing the military with sufficient numbers of high-quality deployable ground forces: conscription. America has nearly always chosen this option to staff its military in times of war. Today, no leading politician in either party will come anywhere near the idea—the draft having replaced Social Security as the third rail of American politics. This will have to change if the United States is to remain the world's preeminent power.

Traditional conscription has its obvious downsides. On a practical level, draftees tend to be less motivated than volunteers. Because they serve for relatively short periods of time (typically two years), any investment made in their training is lost to the military once the draftees return to civilian life. And despite the current manpower shortage, there's no foreseeable scenario in which all 28 million young Americans currently of draft age would be needed.

Above all else, there's the serious ethical problem that conscription means government compelling young adults to risk death, and to kill—an act of the state that seems contrary to the basic notions of liberty which animate our society.

In practice, however, our republic has decided many times throughout its history that a draft was necessary to protect those basic liberties. Even if you disagreed with the decision to invasion of Iraq, or think the president's rhetoric is demagogic and his policies disastrous, it is hard to argue that Islamic terrorism isn't a threat to freedom

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A modernized draft would demand that the privileged participate. It would give all who serve a choice over how they serve, and it would provide the troop strength we need, without compelling any American to carry a gun.

and security, at home and abroad. Moreover, any American, liberal or conservative, ought to have moral qualms about basing our nation's security on an all-volunteer force drawn disproportionately, as ours is, from America's lower socioeconomic classes. And the cost of today's war is being borne by an extremely narrow slice of America. Camp Pendleton, Calif., home to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, is also home to approximately one-seventh of the U.S. fatalities from Iraq. In theory, our democracy will not fight unpopular wars because the people who must bear the casualties can impose their will on our elected leaders to end a war they do not support. But when such a small fraction of America shoulders the burden—and pays the cost —of America's wars, this democratic system breaks down.

Nor are the practical considerations of a draft impossible to overcome. A draft lottery, of the kind that existed in the peacetime draft of the 1950s, with no exemptions for college students, would provide the military an appropriate and manageable amount of manpower without the class inequities that poisoned the national culture during Vietnam. Such a system, however, would not avoid the problem of flooding the military with less-than-fully-motivated conscripts.

A better solution would fix the weaknesses of the all-volunteer force without undermining its strengths. Here's how such a plan might work. Instead of a lottery, the federal government would impose a requirement that no four-year college or university be allowed to accept a student, male or female, unless and until that student had completed a 12-month to two-year term of service. Unlike an old-fashioned draft, this 21st-century service requirement would provide a vital element of personal choice. Students could choose to fulfill their obligations in any of three ways: in national service programs like AmeriCorps (tutoring disadvantaged children), in homeland security assignments (guarding ports), or in the military. Those who chose the latter could serve as military police officers, truck drivers, or other non-combat specialists requiring only modest levels of training. (It should be noted that the Army currently offers two-year enlistments for all of these jobs, as well as for the infantry.) They would be deployed as needed for peacekeeping or nation-building missions. They would serve for 12-months to two years, with modest follow-on reserve obligations.

Whichever option they choose, all who serve would receive modest stipends and GI Bill-type college grants. Those who sign up for lengthier and riskier duty, however, would receive higher pay and larger college grants. Most would no doubt pick the less dangerous options. But some would certainly select the military—out of patriotism, a sense of adventure, or to test their mettle. Even if only 10 percent of the one-million young people who annually start at four-year colleges and universities were to choose the military option, the armed forces would receive 100,000 fresh recruits every year. These would be motivated recruits, having chosen the military over other, less demanding forms of service. And because they would all be college-grade and college-bound, they would have—to a greater extent than your average volunteer recruit—the savvy and inclination to pick up foreign languages and other skills that are often the key to effective peacekeeping work.

A 21st-century draft like this would create a cascading series of benefits for society. It would instill a new ethic of service in that sector of society, the college-bound, most likely to reap the fruits of American prosperity. It would mobilize an army of young people for vital domestic missions, such as helping a growing population of seniors who want to avoid nursing homes but need help with simple daily tasks like grocery shopping. It would give more of America's elite an experience of the military. Above all, it would provide the all-important surge capacity now missing from our force structure, insuring that the military would never again lack for manpower. And it would do all this without requiring any American to carry a gun who did not choose to do so.

The war in Iraq has shown us, and the world, many things: the bloody costs of inept leadership; the courage of the average American soldier; the hunger for democracy among some of the earth's most oppressed people. But perhaps more than anything, Iraq has shown that our military power has limits. As currently constituted, the U.S. military can win the wars, but it cannot win the peace, nor can it commit for the long term to the stability and security of a nation such as Iraq. Our enemies have learned this, and they will use that knowledge to their advantage in the next war to tie us down and bleed us until we lose the political will to fight.

If America wishes to retain its mantle of global leadership, it must develop a military force structure capable of persevering under these circumstances. Fortunately, we know how to build such a force. We have done it many times in the past. The question is: Do we have the will to do so again? ◆

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Off Track

America's economy is losing its competitive edge, and Washington hasn't noticed.

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells

There is a moment in the lifespan of every cool new gadget—two years after Bill Gates buys one, a year and a half after the popular press gets wind of it—that its price drops enough to show up in significant numbers on the shelves at Best Buy, the electronic superstore. At this instant, the product becomes accessible for middle class Americans, something they can imagine themselves buying, and so these electronics stores have become temples to innovation, the place most Americans go to get as close to the cutting edge as most of them dare. On weekend afternoons, Best Buy is as bustling as a souk, full of grandmothers and little kids tooling around with digital video cameras and geeked-out salesmen explaining to the moms that the cell phones in their hands have nearly the computing power of desktop PCs. But it's the men who are the most transported, moving from department to department with gawky reverence. At a Best Buy I visited recently in Alexandria, Va., I watched one dad gaze in wonder at row upon row of giant plasma televisions—elegant silver-framed screens that seemed not just to capture the way the world looks, but to improve upon it. He watched bees extract honey from flowers, and spiraling footballs drop into the hands of receivers, and you could almost see a two-part thought process play out over his face: First, *If I wait a year, these sets will be half the price.* Second, *Screw it, I'm buying one now!*

But there was something else I noticed: Whereas a decade ago the most creative, groundbreaking stuff came from Silicon Valley, now it all seemed to come from overseas. The plasma televisions were from Korea; the computer-like cell phones were from Finland; the feature-packed digital cameras were from Japan.

During the last six months, we have begun, quietly, to enter a newly tense moment, with university presidents, business leaders, and columnists delivering ominous-sounding reports and editorials about the threat to American innovation posed by a freshly competitive world—the renewed vitality of western Europe, Japan and Korea, and the ravenous growth of China and India. "We no longer have a lock on technology," David Baltimore, a Nobel laureate and the current president of the California Institute of Technology, wrote recently in the *Los Angeles Times*. "Europe is increasingly competitive, and Asia has the potential to blow us out of the water."

What worriers like Baltimore are beginning to grasp is that these changes are emerging just as the American economy is being made more vulnerable by the movement of manufacturing and service jobs overseas. As a result, we've become increasingly dependent on maintaining our edge in discovering the new technologies and applications that create whole new industries—just as other countries are closing that gap.

Benjamin Wallace-Wells is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

Art by Fred Harper

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This is a fundamentally new threat. In the '70s and '80s, Japanese and European firms adopted American technology and made key improvements in process and design to shave cost and increase quality. Now, foreign companies are making many of the most important breakthroughs themselves. This shift is part of a change in strategy: instead of copying our innovations, foreign governments have decided to copy our very model of innovating. They have studied our centers of invention, the Silicon Valleys and Research Triangles, where university scientists, venture capitalists, high-tech entrepreneurs, and educated, creative workers, many of them from overseas, congregate. These creative centers, our competitors have learned, were the result of federal policy—decades of investment in basic scientific research; patent law changes that allowed universities to capitalize on discoveries made in their labs; financial reforms that gave rise to the venture capital industry; and immigration laws that opened the door to talented foreigners.

Over the last decade, our competitors have implemented similar policies at home: They have built universities, reformed financial markets, invited in immigrants, and made the development and adoption of new technologies national goals. Now, they're reaping the benefits. The technologies behind plasma screens emerged have been refined and expanded in labs under a research partnership between the Korean government and the electronics maker Samsung. Europe established its lead in mobile phones when European countries set a single standard for mobile communications (American firms are hobbled by lower-quality spectrum and three competing standards).

Foreign competitors are edging out the United States not just in today's snazzy consumer goods, but in the technologies that will define the marketplace in the years to come. Most economists and new economy thinkers believe that the likeliest candidate for the Next Big Thing is the research being done in nanotechnology, a catch-all term for the manipulation of matter at the molecular level. Nanotechnology could someday be used to repair broken DNA to prevent cancer, create supercomputers the size of pinheads, or fabricate building materials 150 times the strength of steel. American scientists have been tinkering with nanotechnologies for 20 years. But some of the most cutting-edge research today is coming from overseas. Last August, Israeli scientists announced that they'd managed to develop manipulable nano-wires, tiny organic tools they could use to rearrange atoms and conduct electricity over microscopic spaces, a breakthrough a leading MIT nanotechnologist admitted American researchers had been chasing "for many years." In September, Japanese scientists announced that they would soon be able to use nano-engineering to build a computer chip 30 times more powerful than Intel's best. The breakthrough led American analysts to conclude that the United States was beginning to lose the race to bring nanotechnology products to market.

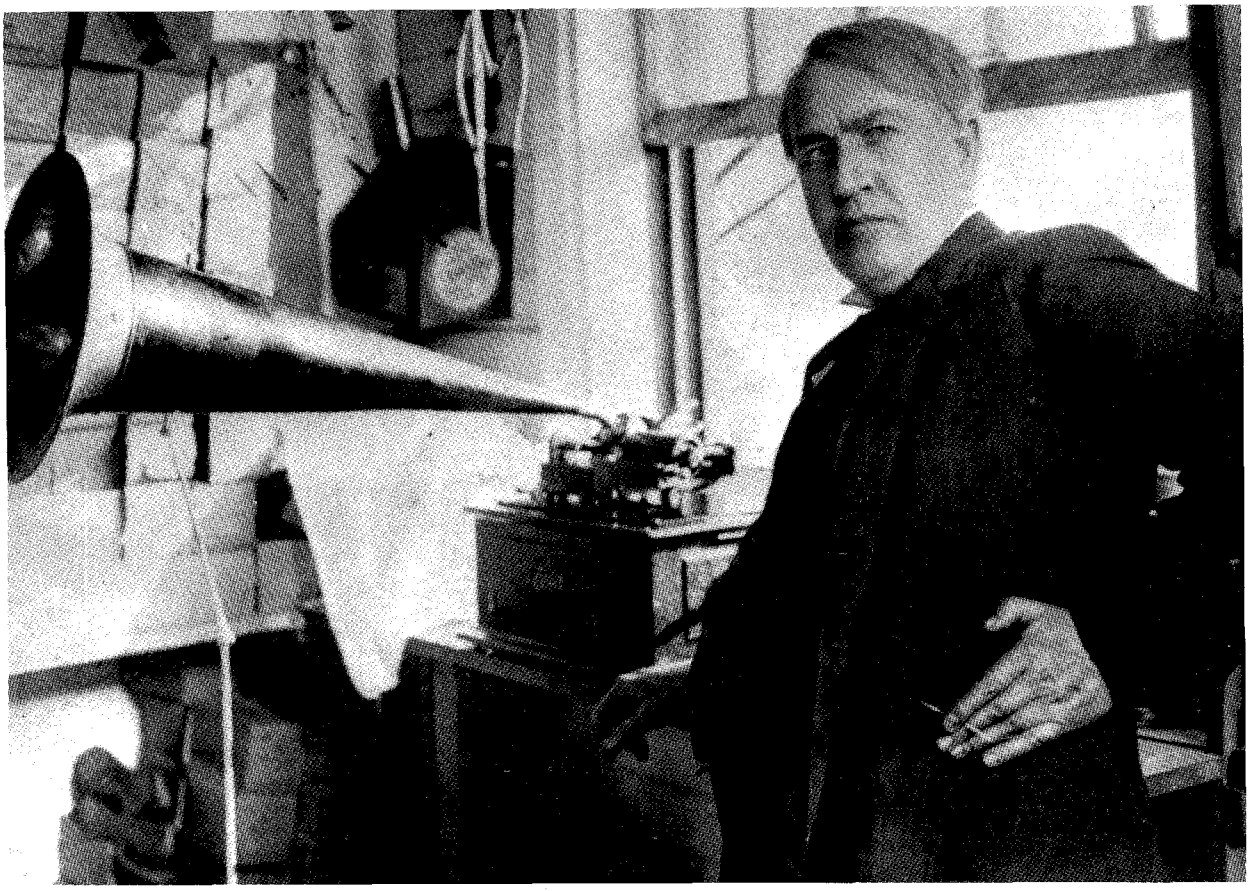
The worry of economists and business leaders is not simply that Japan, Israel, or South Korea will beat us, like one football team does to another. It is, more precisely, that we'll only be able to take advantage of rising wages in those countries (and afford our own here) if we continue to create new, cutting-edge products and services to sell to those countries—and right now America does not seem to be doing as much of that as we were just a few years ago.

This new competition from other developed countries, and the failure of America to fully keep pace, is one cause of our anemic job creation, three years after what was, by historical standards, a brief and fairly light recession. Another reason, of course, is the rise of China and India, where U.S. firms have not only moved manufacturing plants but also "outsourced" service sector jobs. America's employment base is being squeezed by these two pincers—China and India from below, and the developed world innovating from above. Over time, those pincers may come together, as China and India also become proficient in high-end innovation. China is already opening universities at a breathtaking clip, while Intel, Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft, and Verizon have all opened research labs there—the kind that anchored the development of Silicon Valley. "It's become inevitable," says Ross Armbrecht, president of the Industrial Research Institute, which is the think tank for the research arms of America's corporations, "that more and more of the most far-reaching innovations will be going overseas, to India and China, in the near future."

Economics is a negotiation in uncertainties, and so nobody's really sure what all of these changes will mean for the well-being of the American middle class. But when you survey economists, policymakers, and business leaders about America's long-term future, it's hard to find many rank optimists; there are the Panicked, and then there are the Merely Tense. Richard Lester, the head of MIT's Center for Innovation, told me he belongs in the latter camp: "Things look somewhat bleak in the long-term, but if you look around Boston, at the incredible concentration of talent and opportunity here, we've still got a head start, and if we're smart we can probably build on it." Among the Panicked are economists such as MIT Nobelist Paul Samuelson, who has recently argued that the rapid spread of innovative capacity to other countries with lower labor costs makes him doubt the whole doctrine of "comparative advantage," on which much of modern economics rests.

If there's a way to escape this grim future, economists agree, it is for America to reverse its slowly slumping innovation machine. Perhaps the hottest area of economic research right now centers around technology, trying to figure out what exactly the United States did in the '90s and how we can do it again. In university economics departments and corporate executive suites across the country, the sense that we're in a pivotal fight for continued economic preeminence is already common

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



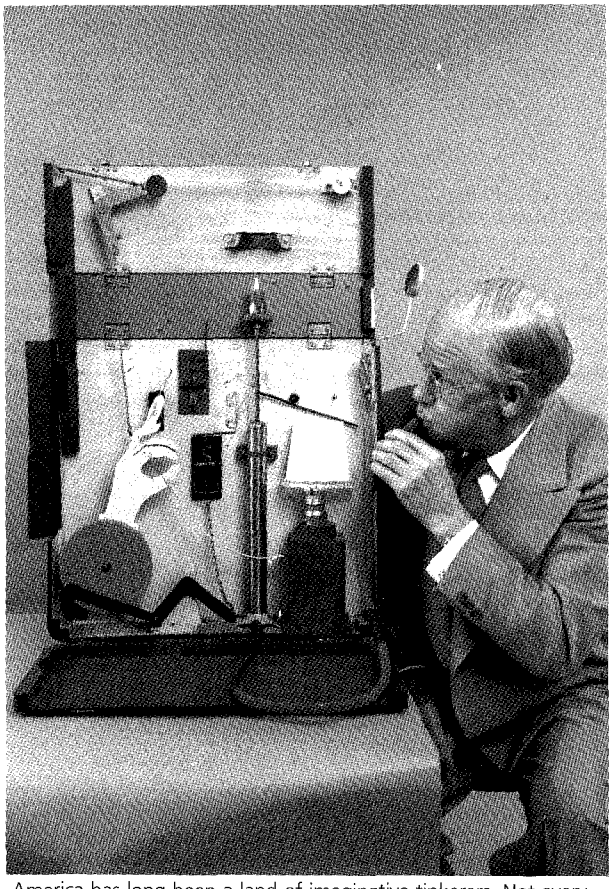
knowledge.

But in Washington, these new economic realities have barely been noticed.

The heroism of the 30-year mortgage

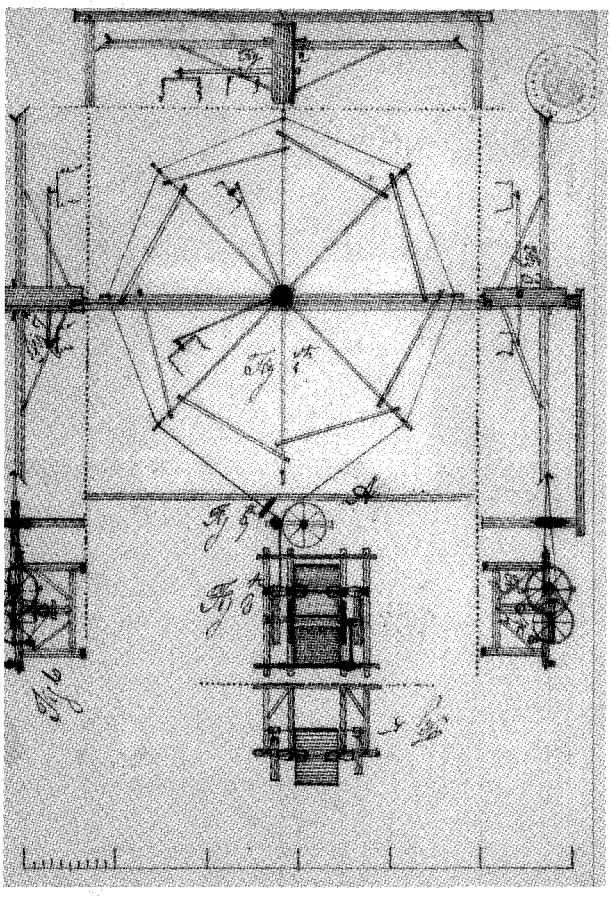
On an overcast day in mid-December, President Bush assembled a group of CEOs at the Reagan Building—a behemoth of a federal office complex that has become the favorite venue for small-government conservatives—for a conference to promote his economic agenda. The tone of the conference, so soon after a winning election, was upbeat, cheery, back-slapping, the happy Chamber of Commerce banter of executives who have recognized a problem that they know how to fix. At the end of the day, the president himself took the stage. He said the economy was fundamentally strong and that government's role would be to "create an environment that encourages capital flows and job creation through wise fiscal policy." To do this, he said, he would ask for Congress to privatize Social Security and make his tax cuts permanent. He compared himself favorably to Franklin Roosevelt. He left the stage.

During the same conference, two floors up in the very same building, a group called the Council on Competitiveness held another event for the press, in which it laid out a very different vision. This group, comprised of 400 blue-chip business executives (the CEOs of IBM, Pepsi, and General Motors, among others) and university presidents—as rough an approximation of the American



America has long been a land of imaginative tinkerers. Not every invention finds the same commercial success. *Top:* Thomas Alva Edison with the first phonograph. *Bottom:* In 1955, American amateur inventor Russel E. Oakes demonstrated a model of his hydraulic device which turns off bedroom lights after a person has fallen asleep.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



From the commercial inventions hall of fame: *Top:* Sketch of the spinning jenny, circa 1750. *Bottom:* A new innovation—canned beer—took off when it debuted in 1937.

establishment as you could fit in a single room—was nearly as downbeat as the president was buoyant. The astonishingly fast rise of international competitors, they warned, has meant that the American economy has reached an "inflection point," a "unique and delicate historic juncture" at which America, "for the first time in our history...is confronting the prospect of a reverse brain drain."

The report made a point of noting that the United States remains the world's dominant economy, the leader in fields ranging from biotechnology to computers to entertainment, but the CEOs nevertheless cited worrying evidence that this dominance might not last. For decades, the United States ranked first in the world in the percentage of its GDP devoted to scientific research; now, we've dropped behind Japan, Korea, Israel, Sweden, and Finland. The number of scientific papers published by Americans peaked in 1992 and has fallen 10 percent; a decade ago, the United States led the world in scientific publications, but now it trails Europe. For two centuries, a higher proportion of Americans had gone to university than have citizens of any other country; now several nations in Asia and Europe have caught up. "Those competitor countries...are not only wide awake," said Shirley Ann Jackson, the president of the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences, "but they are running a marathon...and we tend to run sprints."

While the president's talk focused almost exclusively on the need to free up capital for investment, these CEOs barely mentioned that as a problem. Instead, they stressed various below-the-radar government actions that they felt were undermining America's competitive edge: security arrangements that have crimped the supply of educated immigrants; recent cuts in science funding (the president's 2005 budget sliced money for research in 21 of 24 areas); and the reassigning of what research funding remains to applied research, most of it in homeland security and the military, and away from the basic scientific research that economists say is the essential engine of future economic growth. They also expressed concern about those policies Washington was not pursuing but should be: broadening access to patents; increasing research into alternative fuels; and bringing information technology into the health care market.

When the newspapers reported the event the next day, the president's speech got front-page treatment. The CEO's presentation received only a short item on page E3 of *The Washington Post*, and no mention at all in *The New York Times*. This gap in media coverage reflected not only the power of a newly elected president to dominate the news, but also what might be called a macroeconomic bias. When the press and most Americans think of economic policy, they think of macroeconomic matters—tax rates, budget deficits, trade balances—whose fluctuations have instant, tangible effects on interest rates, stock prices, and exchange rates—things newspaper readers and casual investors can see,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The same White House that has been bold, and recklessly so, on macro-economic policy has been timid, and recklessly so, on micro-economic policy.

track, and relate to.

But there is another set of ways in which Washington has always affected the long-term health of the economy: by making investments, regulatory changes, and infrastructure improvement to spur the economy forward, creating new industries and giving new tools to old ones. This category of policies has not traditionally been given a single name but might best be called "microeconomic policy." Historically, this has been the heroic side of economic policy: The Louisiana Purchase may have been a shrewd maneuver for continental expansion, but it was also a jobs program for landless citizens eager to carve their own farms in the wilderness—which is how Jefferson sold the treaty to Congress. The land grant college system, signed into law by Abraham Lincoln, provided the nation's farmers with expert guidance on the latest agricultural techniques to improve their crop yields. No entrepreneur could figure out how to mass produce cars profitably, writes Harold Evans in his excellent new book *They Made America*, until Henry Ford fought an aggressive bid against restrictive patents. The pharmaceutical, financial, and airline industries blossomed thanks to the creation of the FDA, SEC, and FAA, which gave customers some assurance of safety when they popped pills, traded stocks, or boarded flights. The G.I. Bill provided a generation of veterans with the college educations they needed to build the post-war middle class. The creation of the federally-guaranteed 30-year mortgage proved the decisive tool in the growth of the post-war American suburb.

These investments and regulatory changes aren't merely tools of the past; it is impossible to imagine the '90s boom emerging without them. Early investment from the Pentagon helped nurture the Internet. The algorithm that powered Google was developed when co-founder Larry Page, then a Stanford graduate student, won a federal grant to write a more efficient sorting and search engine for libraries. The innovative new medicines that have driven the expansion of the biotech and pharmaceutical industries arose from university research largely financed by the National Institutes of Health. The commercialization of these and other discoveries was financed by a venture capital industry that developed only after legislation, sponsored by Republican lawmakers and signed by President Jimmy Carter, enabled an advisory firm to hold significant stock in a start-up.

For most of the country's history, both political parties have favored various microeconomic initiatives—though Democrats have been more comfortable with using government to intervene in the marketplace, while Republicans have tended towards a laissez-faire approach that stressed lowering the cost of capital. These tensions sparked big debates in the 1980s about "industrial policy," with (mostly) Democrats arguing for various kinds of sector-specific technology investments and relief from Japanese competition and (mostly) Republicans arguing that the federal government should cut taxes, trust the market, and not "pick winners and losers." Still, each party has traditionally played on both the macro and microeconomic policy fields. Kennedy cut marginal tax rates when they were excessively high in the early 1960s. Clinton cut the deficit to reduce interest rates. Eisenhower built the interstate highway system. Reagan gave crucial tariff protection to America's then-ailing semiconductor industry.

Under President Bush, however, the GOP's natural economic policy tendencies have been hyper-charged by a grand political vision. Karl Rove, Grover Norquist, and other Republican strategists have argued that massive annual tax cuts and the privatization of Social Security will not only increase the flow of capital into the marketplace, but will also put Democrats at a long-term electoral disadvantage and usher in a new era of GOP dominance. That these policies also require the government to take on trillions of dollars in extra debt, just as the first baby boomers are reaching retirement and trade imbalances are reaching historic levels, is seen by GOP leaders as a risk worth taking. And so the White House and Congress have pursued tax cutting and Social Security privatization with relentless focus, to the exclusion of almost everything else. As *The New York Times* columnist Daniel Altman has written, the president has chosen economic advisers such as N. Gregory Mankiw, Lawrence Lindsey, and R. Glenn Hubbard who support this singular view. "What you have in Washington now is an inability to get beyond the macroeconomic, to understand that there are so many other investments government needs to be making and actions it ought to be taking, and that our future is going to hinge in large part on what decisions we make there," Michael Mandel, the influential economist and columnist for *BusinessWeek*, told me in January. "And right now in Washington, they're not even looking at any of that."

Even when the Bush administration's leading economists discuss innovation, it is mostly in this light—they argue that reducing the cost of capital will lead companies to invest in new technologies. They rely in part on the research of economists such as Dan Sichel of the Fed-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eral Reserve and Dale Jorgenson of Harvard, who examined the sources of the '90s boom and found that capital availability played an important role. But not even Jorgenson thinks this was the whole story: "You need something to invest in, and so all those other things you're talking about were crucially important too, in the long run," he told me in January. "If you're looking at Washington today, you have to ask, what are they doing to make those investments now?"

Bush v. Newt

The same White House that has been bold, and recklessly so, on macroeconomic policy has been timid, and recklessly so, on microeconomic policy. It has made only a few feints at such policies and investments, and compared to the relentless energy with which the administration has pursued tax cuts and Social Security reform, its attention to such microeconomic strategies has been only tepid, intermittent, Potemkin-like—done to quiet a constituency or send a political signal.

A good example is broadband. Most experts predict that when a critical mass of homes and businesses acquire high-speed Internet connections, an explosion of economic growth will follow as whole new industries, such as video-conferencing and online video gaming, become possible. But these new industries are likely to flourish in whichever countries achieve near-universal broadband first, and at the current pace, that won't be the United States. For four years, the FCC has pursued a "deregulatory" telecommunications policy that has effectively blocked competition, giving phone companies little incentive to build out their broadband networks. Over the same period, the United States has dropped from 4th to 10th in the world in percentage of its homes and businesses with broadband. Not surprisingly, South Korea, which is first on the list, is now the world's leader in developing online video games, the fastest-growing segment of an industry that's bigger than movies, and its software companies are beginning to lure top American programmers to Seoul.

Early last year, Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) began to use a line in his stump speeches that challenged the president on America's declining broadband position. The president responded by proposing the goal of achieving "90 percent broadband access" by 2007. The goal was bold-sounding but empty: By most measures, 90 percent of Americans already have "access" to broadband in the sense that they could, if they wished, sign up for it; the problem is that, compared to other countries, relatively few Americans have done so.

A similar inattention has held in wireless—a technology that venture capitalists believe would explode if the government would make a simple regulatory change. Since the president came into office, bankers, venture capitalists and economists have been urging the FCC to reassign unused, high-quality spectrum that is now reserved for television broadcasters and the military. "Nobody was using this," says Wharton's Kevin Werbach; reassigning it was "a no-brainer." The FCC, under Chairman Michael Powell, did nothing for two years and then delegated the matter to a Task Force to investigate how best to reassign spectrum. The task force reported two years ago, but the commission has still not begun to reassign spectrum. Meanwhile, the United States has fallen only farther behind in wireless technologies to European and Asian firms.

But there is perhaps no economic sector that is undergoing a more profound evolution, or in which government investments could make a bigger difference, than energy. As India and China continue their rapid industrialization, and with it their need for oil, analysts predict that the price of oil, already sky-high, will grow even more prohibitive—which means that whichever companies develop the most effective alternative fuels and energy-efficiency technology will revolutionize the industry, and whichever countries can produce those breakthroughs may become rich on it, the Bahrains of the 21st century.

Right now, however, the United States is not poised to be one of those countries. Demand in America for electric-gas hybrid cars already outstrips supply, but Ford is so behind the curve that it's leasing its hybrid technology from Toyota. Europe, meanwhile, is setting the pace on the next promising auto technology; clean diesel-electric hybrids. Companies in Europe and Asia have also made more progress than have their American counterparts in developing the technology for crafting energy-efficient appliances, offices, and factories—a consequence of higher energy taxes and stricter environmental regulations in those countries.

The Bush administration's most vigorous response to all this has been to increase the funding for research into hydrogen-powered cars. Hydrogen technology is promising. But it is also decades away from the market, and even hydrogen buffs believe the administration has gone about its program the wrong way, trying to build fuel cells before figuring out the more daunting challenges of how to extract and transport hydrogen. Moreover, there's a creeping suspicion that hydrogen may end up being far too expensive to compete with other, more feasible, and probably cheaper fuels like biomass ethanol, a technology in which America happens to be a leader. Betting on a single alternative fuel source, hydrogen, at the expense of others is a classic case of "picking winners and losers." The truth is, no one knows yet which technologies or energy sources will define the future.

A better strategy, says Harvard's John Holdren, would be for the federal government to raise automobile fuel efficiency (CAFE) standards, impose a carbon cap-and-trade system for factories and power-plants, and let the market decide which new energy sources and technologies are the best. These ideas now have broader backing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A decade ago, the United States led the world in scientific publications, but now trails Europe. For two centuries, a higher portion of Americans had gone to university than have citizens of any other country; now, several nations in Asia and Europe have caught up.

than they did a decade ago. The bipartisan National Commission on Energy Policy issued a report in December calling such measures the most critical to ensure America's energy future—and that commission's members includes the CEOs of old-line energy giants such as Exelon and ConocoPhillips. And, Holdren told me, executives at old economy companies from Monsanto to Dow Chemical have signed on. "Five years ago, we didn't have a shot at getting them on board," said Holdren, "but the situation is getting dire enough that now they're leading the charge." Still, many sectors, including the automobile and power industries, vehemently oppose higher CAFE standards and carbon emission limits, and the president has repeatedly rejected them.

There is no better example of the administration's Potemkin-style microeconomic policy than the way it has handled the issue of rising medical costs. Here, the administration has talked a good game. During last year's presidential campaign, the president vowed to bring health care out of the "buggy and horse days" by getting the industry to adopt information technologies, such as electronic medical records-keeping and systematic case-management systems, which experts say could save hundreds of billions of dollars and tens of thousands of lives. To this end, he promised a new $50 million health care IT initiative. It was an absurdly small amount, and probably no match for the perverse incentives that keep for-profit medicine from investing in these technologies (see "Best Care Anywhere," January/February 2005). But at least it was something.

That is, until the president signed his 2005 budget into law, which zeroed out the $50 million program. David Brailer, the economist and physician the White House had put in charge of the program, wound up with no money to do anything to install information technology in hospitals—no pilot programs, no cash for education, no seminars for hospital executives. Newt Gingrich, the right's high priest of health IT, told *The New York Times* that the president's defunding of his own program was a "disgrace." (After Gingrich's hue and cry, the White House put the money back in the proposed 2006 budget it submitted to Congress, though some insiders remain skeptical that the program will survive).

Faster, faster

Technology today is diffusing faster than ever. As the Council on Competitiveness has noted, it took 55 years for the automobile to spread to a quarter of the country, 35 years for the telephone, 22 years for the radio, 16 years for the personal computer, 13 years for the cell phone, and only seven years for the Internet. Because technologies are adopted so quickly, it has become more important than ever for a country's industries to be at the cutting edge—there's simply much less catch-up time. (Fall five years behind on building car factories in the early 20th century and you lost some profits; fall five years behind on hybrid cars and you may have lost an industry).

For this reason, the last four years of drift may have already done significant damage to America's long-term economic prospects. The pity is, there was no good reason for the drift. Finding ways to strengthen border security while still providing enough visas for educated immigrants and graduate students is hardly the world's most difficult public policy challenge, and every Fortune 500 corporation in America would cheer such moves. There are no serious ideological reasons why both parties couldn't support reform of patent laws (though certain powerful interest groups would object). It's hard to find a good excuse for why we're falling behind on broadband, or have failed so far to reassign valuable wireless spectrum. (Indeed, a country which until recently had large budget surpluses should by now have found the money to begin wiring the country with fiber-optics, providing higher-quality streams which can transport large data files far faster than broadband.) And even the most politically difficult actions, such as raising CAFE standards and imposing a flexible carbon emissions cap to spur energy innovation, should have been possible after 9/11, with the nation willing to make sacrifices and dire warnings from all political wings about our dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

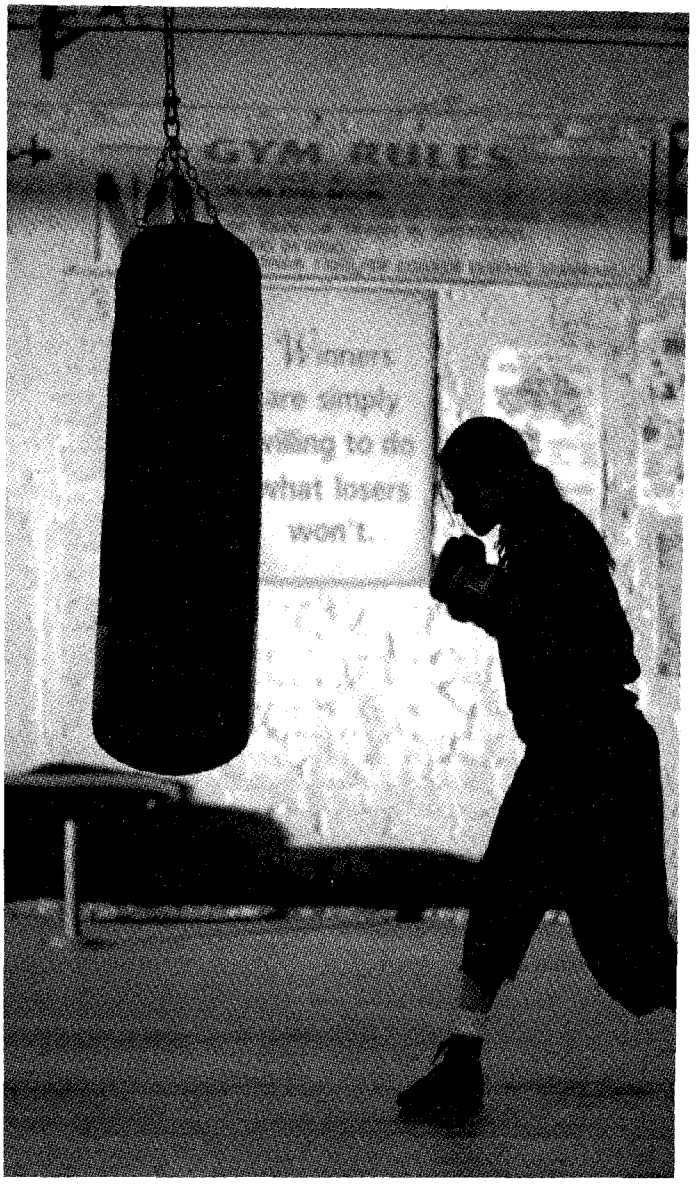
But what worries economists even more than the past four years of drift is the prospect of continued inaction. The speed of technological change is now too fast, and the economic competition too fierce, for America to afford that. There is no law that says the United States will be the world's preeminent economic power forever. But neither is there any reason we can't rise to the challenge, as we did in the 1980s and 1990s. Then, as now, becoming more innovative is the solution to our problem. But first, we must recognize that we *have* a problem. ◆

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Battered Women

Female boxing is brutal and hopeless.

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells



When I was just out of college I worked as a newspaper reporter in Philadelphia, and we used to go to Friday night boxing fights at a club called the Blue Horizon, on an iffy block of North Broad Street at precisely the point where Center City peters out into a vast ghetto. Like the rest of Philly, the Blue Horizon knows very well what it is selling, a twisted nostalgia for a time when things were tougher. The concession stand—a fold-up table in the entrance hall—sells only $3 cans of Bud and Bud Light. Past the stand, the space opens up into a big, brightly-lit room with a couple of dozen rows of wooden chairs, like those in an elementary school classroom, surrounding a boxing ring four feet above the floor, a theater in the round. These are the cheap seats, 15 bucks, half of them filled with blacks from North Philly, the other half with slumming yuppies like me. Only two in 10 are women, but their catcalls are as rough and fierce as any.

For 50 bucks, you can buy yourself an armchair seat on a balcony ringing the room, from which you can peer down over the room. These, however, are always filled with older Italian men, the Unindicted Co-conspirator set, fat and inert in their little chairs, each one looking like a marshmallow stuffed into a shot glass. They spend the evening pretty much unmoved by the drama of the moment, passing assured little nods back and forth: They knew who would win all along. The lights are bright, and the crowd is less drunk and less loud than you'd expect. But they are experts.

They know, for instance, that it is no fun to watch heavyweights or lightweights fight because a heavyweight is too big for any but a world-class opponent to knock out, and all but the best of lightweights (135 pounds) don't have enough bulk to hit hard enough to make the fight interesting. So, all the fighters are middleweights and welterweights; the first matches of the night are between the youngest and greenest, and they slowly build to the headliners. The first two bouts are brief snoozers, three-rounders between fighters just good enough to play defense but not good enough to really hit. The crowd focuses on the way the boxers shift weight, issuing idle calls of "yes, sir!" when a fighter works himself a brief opening with his feet, exhaling slowly when his fists move too slowly to take advantage of it. By the third fight, a six-rounder, the boxers can really hit; as they tire, their defenses loosen, and their heads start to snap back against the fat compress of the other guy's fists. The mafia goons on the balcony are applauding now, and their cigars are out; the antiquated on the floor are calling out advice—left, move, left, move. When the ring card girls—third-string, fourth-decade strippers from a South Philly gentlemen's club—come out between rounds, they are greeted for the first time now with more than an auditorium full of lazy disinterest. You realize that everyone in the room,

Benjamin Wallace-Wells is an editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from the old Philly goons to the homeboys and the yuppies, is invested, against all probability, in the idea that something historic might happen here tonight, that a new welterweight might emerge, that the epic is still possible in Philly. And then, for the first of two last fights before the headliner, they bring out the girls.

The girls were ugly and thick, but the crowd didn't care, whistling and hooting for them—"Sweet Ass Angie!" junk like that. It seemed almost endearing at first. A scrawny little black girl, a north Philly local named Angie Nelsen, danced around the ring, throwing up her gloves and revving up the crowd. In the red corner, called the ring announcer, was Jessica Flaherty, a corn-rowed white girl from Amish country who couldn't muster the same kind of flamboyance; she just looked scared. Clapping, the crowd leaned forward—here was something new. The girls shrugged off their robes—now looking young and nervous—and charged each other at the bell, wind-milling with both arms.

The worst male fighters know how to play defense, but these girls looked like they'd never been trained. They didn't even try to protect themselves. There was no effort to dodge, no shifting of weight, no clever, calculated movement of feet. Both girls just kept charging, swinging both fists at the same time. It was like watching six-year-olds fight before they're old enough to realize that they might be hurt: All you want to do is make it stop. The action in the middle of the ring was an inchoate tangle of limbs and fists. Thirty seconds into the whirling, Angie fell down, striking the mat violently, as if she was attacking it. Jessica waved her arms above her head chaotically—a caricatured Rocky gesture—a huge grin on her face. I thought to myself that these two must be the worst girl fighters in the world. But it turned out that six months earlier, Jessica had placed second in her weight class at the National Golden Gloves—this was as good as it got.

They never should have let Angie back in the fight, but they did. She wobbled out to the center of the ring, too hurt to lift her hands above her waist. Jessica whacked her right in the nose; Angie went down, a series of limbs hitting the canvas in a successive heap. The nervous white girl from Lancaster started dancing around, and it was "Sweet Ass Jessie" this time, her reward whistles and hooting. Angie was out for 15 minutes, white-cloaked medical personnel bending ominously over her. They revived her, and the same crowd that had cheered the sophistication of the earlier male boxers gave a perfunctory clap for Angie's health, and then immediately started chanting for the evening's male headliner, a fighter with the nickname "Black Gold."

Hard knocks

Boxing has long existed in a cultural ghetto, revelling in its corruption and violence. Women's boxing operates in a further ghetto still. No one other than the fighters really takes it seriously—not the audience, not the referees, not the trainers. I've been to more than a dozen women's fights since that first one, and nearly all were just like it, 45-second bloodfests. It's hard to figure what appeals to the girls who fight: You get thrown in the ring with some cretin who is trying to rip your head off, you have no idea how to defend yourself, and all the while a thousand sweaty men are shouting at you, trying to be clever about your rear end. No matter how long you fight or how good you become, you'll never be the headliner, some man will. Nobody cares enough to teach you the craft. The fights are brutal, sexualized, and uncontrollable. What's more, there is not much money in the sport—probably the only female boxers you've ever heard of are the daughters of Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier—because no significant television audience would ever pay to see this crap. And yet the girls keep signing up, keep coming.

A movie (and, it now seems, Oscar favorite) out from Paramount since Christmas, called *Million Dollar Baby*, traces the pathologies of this sport with a mostly deft touch and only the occasional off-putting bout of fantasy. The storyline is simple: A poor girl from the Ozarks with the ethnically-precise name of Maggie Fitzgerald, moves to Los Angeles. She is 31 and has been a diner waitress since 13, picking half-finished steaks off her customers' plates for her own dinner. She believes she will be a champion women's boxer—why she wants to fight is never fully explained, though Maggie, who is played by Hilary Swank, seems to think it's the only thing she has ever been good at. Maggie seizes upon a respected, older blue-collar trainer named Frankie Dunn and begs him to make her a champion. He balks. (Because Clint Eastwood plays Dunn, there is also a lot of soulful squinting.) She demonstrates her will, perseverance, brains, and determination. After a lot of gruff I-don't-train-girls talk, Dunn takes her on and Maggie proves to be an outstanding student. Dunn teaches her the pure mechanics of the sport in a long training sequence that is the best explanatory document of boxing I've ever seen or read, Malcolm Gladwell assigned to the ring. To pivot to the left, you press down on your right big toe. Boxing is counter-intuitive, about opposites.

To the surprise of no one except the movie's characters, Maggie makes it. Dunn teaches her how to bait younger, stronger girls; he gets her championship fights, and she starts to win. This was the moment when I became nervous—it seemed like the story was drifting into fantasy. The crowds Maggie fought in front of were supportive, paternal, interested in the tactics of her fight and not in the rough pornography of watching two women pound one another. She fought in clean, well-lit places. She fought expertly, against expert opponents, and for this mastery of craft she made millions of dollars. This was Rocky, with a second X chromosome.

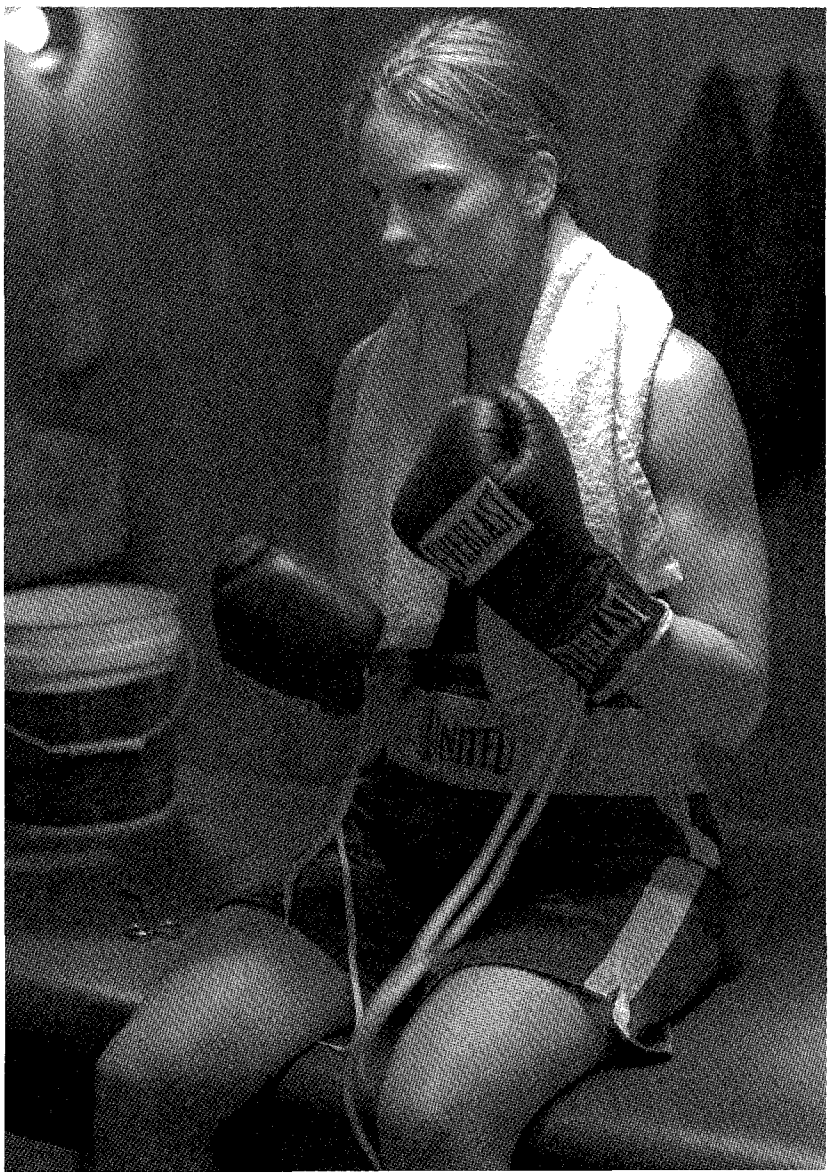
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This was the full narrative thrust that the critics had described, and so I went in expecting to be disappointed by a fraud of a movie.

But there's an awkward convention that persists among movie critics. They never mention the end of any film, the moment when the director's judgment on all the film's events and themes is finally consummated. It's in some ways a ridiculous stand, like assessing Lincoln's conduct of the Civil War without considering anything that happened after Antietam. And in the case of Million Dollar Baby, it's particularly absurd because the fantasy that has built up dissolves in a ring scene of sickening brutality, and the movie's last 30 minutes (though they feel like a dramatic fraud) end up showing the guilt and tumult that develops in those who back a fighter who has been left near death, and a girl fighter at that. In this, the film doesn't cheat.

Boxed in

Women's boxing inherits its audience, and therefore its pathologies, from the men's side of the sport. Boxing was always pornography of some kind; it's no accident that the two great novels of black male experience, *Invisible Man* and *Black Boy*, both have extended boxing scenes in which muscular, scared black kids fight for the pleasure of fat, white crowds. But things have gotten worse since Ellison and Wright's time. Men's boxing has spent the last half century in decline; what was once one of the country's most popular sports has descended into a subculture that is now wholly dangerous and corrupt; few middle-class people, outside of slummers like me, ever go to fights anymore. Boxing itself is responsible for part of this, with its corrupt regulatory bodies and its decision to relegate the sport to pay-per-view. And it doesn't help that American tastes have dandified; this is a middle-class country now, and boxing simply isn't a middle-class sport. And so for the older gentlemen in the Blue Horizon's balcony, the very presence of women fighting in front of them marks a comedown in the world; what their fathers watched as art is now inescapably exploitation, a catfight.



Women's boxing seems to be barely not worth worrying about, another freak show, except that for all the indignities and the lack of reward, the fighters keep coming. There's no shortage of working class girls out there who, when all else fails, rely on their physical selves and swing away, hoping to steal a little celebrity on the side. The fighters themselves seem unable to explain their motivations; when pressed by interviewers, they say only that they should be able to box if boys do. *Million Dollar Baby* can feel similarly unsatisfying. It takes Maggie's assertion that boxing is the only thing she could ever be famous at, accepts—as movie people tend to—that every human being has an inner yearning to become a celebrity and leaves it there.

Or maybe it doesn't, quite. Maggie's career, after all, traces the arc of the sport: What began as a few day-dreamy women in gyms, believing they could punch back as hard and as fast as some of the guys, has devolved into something very ugly, very violent. It documents the cheat run on working-class girls who think they might find liberation in the ring, like Rocky did, like all the guys can. ◆

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

7 Mistakes Superheroines Make

Why the latest action-babe flicks flopped.

By Christina Larson

Four years ago, just as beefy, formerly bankable action stars like Steven Seagal, Sylvester Stallone, and Arnold Schwarzenegger were getting a little grayer, a little slower, and a whole lot less popular at the Cineplex, Hollywood rediscovered women. After years of casting actresses as perky love interests and weepy crime victims, movie studios finally realized that women can kick butt. Literally. *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*, *Charlie's Angels*, and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* all vaulted, jabbed, and roundhouse-kicked their way well past the $100-million benchmark of a cinema blockbuster. Male audiences, it turned out, didn't mind seeing the ladies on top, watching kick-boxing action babes such as Cameron Diaz and Angelina Jolie whirl their way through fight scenes (studio estimates show *Charlie's Angels*'s audience was 45 percent male; *Tomb Raider*'s was 55 percent); the fact that the heroines were also visually knockouts—and occasionally danced around in their underwear—didn't hurt. And women not only watched the films, they also cranked up the soundtracks, stormed cardio-kickboxing classes at the gym, and hoped that the next *Star Wars* film would star Queen Amidala wielding a wicked uppercut.

Then, as so often happens, Hollywood overreached. Studios didn't pause to figure out why audiences loved action heroines. Instead, they rolled out a formula that pandered to all of the wrong instincts: Trot out hot bodies in tight costumes, choreograph some fight scenes, and wait for the profits to roll in. The result has been a string of box-office bloopers, sequels that upped the titillation factor but lost audiences. *Charlie's Angels 2* didn't rouse ticket sales by sending the girls to wrestle a bikini-clad villainess. *Tomb Raider 2* added a sex scene and an intentional wardrobe malfunction (see-through silver scuba suit), yet grossed barely half what the original movie had made. The stars of last year's *Catwoman* and *Elektra* (in theaters now) both donned Victoria's Secret-inspired costumes, but ticket sales went kersplat even before the Barbie-doll spin-offs hit the shelves. *Catwoman* earned barely $40 million; *Elektra*, which fell out of the top 10 in its third week, is unlikely even to hit that mark.

What Hollywood didn't seem to realize is that the first crop of warrior women won a following because they were strong, smart, and successful in addition to being sexy. Men wanted them, and women wanted to be them. Lara Croft may have originated as pure male fantasy—a buxom video game character with impossible proportions—but on the big screen, she became erudite, well-traveled, a working photojournalist, and went home at night to a house worthy of *Architectural Digest*. On the other hand, Elektra, another comic-book adaptation, might turn heads in her tight-laced scarlet bustier, but her personal magnetism doesn't measure up: She's a gloomy assassin who suffers from nightmares, insomnia, and OCD. Plus she hates her job but can't—or won't—figure out what else to do with her life. You're not likely going to see a bunch of little girls arguing about who gets to play *her*.

Female action stars have always had it harder than the guys. A few win mass appeal and become icons of female aspiration—Wonder Woman first graced the cover of *Ms.* magazine in 1972—but most flounder for fans beyond adolescent

Christina Larson is the managing editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Female superheroes have always had it harder than the guys. A few win mass appeal and become icons of female aspiration, but most flounder for fans beyond adolescent male comic-book readers.

male comic-book readers. It might seem that tightrope-walking between Amazonian strength and femme-fatale status does requires a golden lasso and invisible plane.

But the good news for Hollywood—and audiences—is that there *is* an enduring formula that works. Superheroines since the 1970s—from Wonder Woman to Princess Leia, Charlie's Angels to Lara Croft, Buffy the Vampire Slayer to *Alias*'s Sydney Bristow—have all followed a few simple rules to find success on the big and little screen. And every would-be action babe who has flopped has broken at least one of them. So what's the secret?

1. *Do* fight demons. *Don't* fight only inner demons.
2. *Do* play well with others. *Don't* shun human society.
3. *Do* exhibit self-control. *Don't* exhibit mental disorders.
4. *Do* wear trendy clothes. *Don't* wear fetish clothes.
5. *Do* embrace girl power. *Don't* cling to man hatred.
6. *Do* help hapless men. *Don't* try to kill your boyfriend.
7. *Do* toss off witty remarks. *Don't* look perpetually sullen.

In other words, it might be wise to sidestep *Catwoman*'s decision to latch onto a female mentor who lives alone with three dozen cats and complains, "I was a professor for 20 years, until I was denied tenure—male academia." Or to follow her lead in shrinking from society, telling your beau, "You're a good man, Tom, but you live in a world that has no place for someone like me."

Look, everyone understands that the life of a supernaturally-gifted screen idol is tough. Spiderman, Harry Potter, Batman, Lara Croft, *Charlie's Angels*' Dylan all lost parents. But for Elektra, the loss of her mother seems to have left her irrevocably troubled, full of undirected rage, and popping insomnia pills. She's not dark in the same way as was Bruce Wayne or Lara Croft, slightly aloof billionaires who fight crime as a way to work through their grief. Instead Elektra spends as much screen time running as fighting, worrying that "I have nowhere to go" and inspiring the teenage girl who looks up to her with such wisdom as, "Everybody lies, Abby, nobody tells the truth about themselves," and "I don't want you to be like me."

Compare that to the first scene in *Charlie's Angels*, which ends with the three women riding in a motorboat, their arms linked, wind blowing through their hair, grinning at how brilliantly they just foiled a plane hijacking. They're friends, they're beautiful, they have great jobs, and even if they weren't part of an elite crime-fighting squad backed by an anonymous billionaire, there are plenty of other things they could do for a living. The woman-searching-for-herself trope might work in other genres, but it's a bad fit with superheroes. For female fans, the superheroine saga is a fantasy about being in control. Successful heroines defy everyday restraints: They cheat gravity, physically overpower men, and reflect bullets with silver bracelets. The last thing women want to see is Supergirl whining about her boss, suffering through a mid-life career crisis, and being served divorce papers by Superman. ◆

Kaboom or kersplat?

Let's face it: Moving merchandise is also a big part of being a superheroine these days. But not all action-babe Barbies fly off the shelf. Give the playground set credit for figuring out who they want to be like.

Up, up, and away

Barely left the batcave

On shelves March 05

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

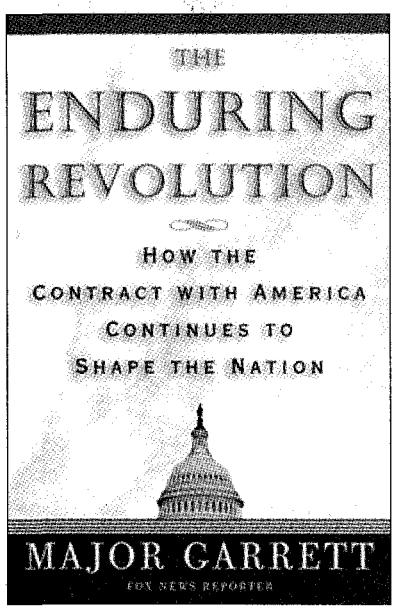
The Newt Republic

Gingrich's ideas were feisty and combative, but ultimately as nihilistic as they were visionary.

By Michael Crowley

Last Sept. 22, nearly all 205 Democratic members of the House of Representatives assembled on the capitol steps to proclaim their basic values. With the 2004 election coming up, voters seemed unsure of just what Democrats stood for. House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi decided it was time for a statement of principles and priorities on which Democratic House candidates everywhere could campaign. Marketing consultants were summoned from New York, California, and Boston to help Pelosi's staff craft the document. It was long and painstaking work, conducted under tight secrecy: Pelosi even barred staffers from taking notes or using Blackberries during meetings. Finally, on that September day, Democrats gathered to unveil the final product: "The New Partnership for America's Future," a 10-page document listing dozens of Democratic priorities from better health care to higher wages to stronger national security.

Cue the sound of crickets chirping. You never heard of the New Partnership, you say? That's no surprise. It was almost completely ignored. None of the major television networks covered its unveiling. *The Washington Post* only mentioned it in passing, while *The New York Times* ignored it completely. Not even Democratic candidates seemed to pay it much attention. "Nobody used it," a senior House Democratic aide recently groused to me.



The Enduring Revolution: How the Contract with America Continues to Shape the Nation
By Major Garrett

Crown, $25.95

The embarrassment was doubly acute because the New Partnership rally had such clear echoes of another event that had occurred almost precisely a decade earlier with smashingly successful results. On Sept. 27, 1994, over 300 Republican House members and candidates gathered outside the Capitol to unveil the "Contract with America." It was a promise, signed by every single GOP candidate, pledging that if the then-minority Republicans won control of the House, they would hold votes on 10 specific priorities, including tax cuts, missile defense, welfare reform, and term limits. The Contract was a hit, earning front-page coverage in the *Times* and the *Post* and defining an election campaign in which Republicans would pick up 54 seats and win a House majority for the first time in 40 years. (Last fall, by contrast, House Democrats lost 2 seats.)

Although the historical parallels are imperfect, the difference between the two events neatly symbolizes the dilemma faced by today's House Democrats. After spending 10 years mired as the minority party in the House, Democrats seem nowhere close to making the sort of bold comeback Republicans made in 1994. Democratic candidates have recently

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

struggled to match the GOP's crisp and simple message about terrorism, tax cuts, and morality. Meanwhile House Republicans have spent four years hammering through the Bush agenda with a failure rate of almost zero. House Democrats are desperately in need of a new strategy.

In their quest, they might want to consult *The Enduring Revolution.* This lively, readable account by FOX News correspondent (and former *Washington Times* reporter) Major Garrett explores the way Republicans devised the Contract with America in 1994, rode it to control of the House, and then used its principles to reshape American politics. Pegged to the Contract's 10th anniversary, it also comes at an important moment for congressional Democrats, who are increasingly asking whether they might learn something from the stunning rise of the Gingrich Republicans a decade ago.

Playing with fire

Garrett argues that the Contract—and the conservative House majority it helped to create—fundamentally changed America and continues to drive national politics. That's certainly true in broad ways. There's little doubt that the House Republicans' focus on tax cuts, budget-balancing, welfare reform, and defense spending dragged Bill Clinton, and thus the Democratic Party, to the right on those issues. And the Bush presidency would, of course, be entirely different were there a Democratic House to contest him. But Garrett overstretches on some of the specifics, as when he argues that John Kerry's proposed middle-class tax cuts last year were somehow inspired by the Contract, when Bill Clinton thought to do the same thing way back in 1992. Likewise, Garrett contends that had House Republicans not passed the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act, which called for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the Iraq war "would have been much harder" to wage. That seems a reach, and moreover it says little about the wisdom of the Contract, which never mentioned Iraq. (Indeed, the Republican class of '94 had a distinctly isolationist strain, and, like the pre-9/11 George Bush, loathed the kind of "nation building" now underway in Mesopotamia.)

Democrats will find such arguments unconvincing and Garrett's occasional forays into a reflexive FOX News-style partisanship maddening. (He bashes Democrats, for instance, for allegedly trying to gut national security. But he exonerates the Gingrich Republicans, who were so myopically obsessed with missile defense—they missed the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.)

But even liberals will be intrigued by Garrett's insider history of how the "Contract with America" was devised. Republicans certainly did not win the House with the Contract alone. First, there was a basic change in attitude. As early as 1980, Newt Gingrich was thinking in detail about winning the House, which Democrats had then controlled for almost 30 years. Along with allies like Dick Armey and Bob Walker, Gingrich convinced fellow Republicans that continued comity and cooperation were pointless and that Democrats were enemies that must be defeated. One former Armey aide explains this new attitude to Garrett: "It was always, 'We've got to get up there and get the majority.' It wasn't just, 'I want to go serve my time.'" This meant organizational changes, as well. Garrett writes that in the run-up to the 1994 election, for instance, the head of the House GOP's campaign committee, Bill Paxon, ordered GOP incumbents to raise money for fellow candidates for the first time in party history; senior Republicans hated the idea but grudgingly played along.

Republicans also learned to use flamethrowers. The House's young conservatives were brilliantly effective at portraying the Democratic House as an undemocratic and outright corrupt institution. Gingrich, in particular, was relentless in his attacks on top House Democrats, such as former House Speaker Jim Wright (D-Wash.) and Ways and Means Chairman Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.), and never missed an opportunity to manufacture a demagogic fury about the House's supposed "corruption" (Gingrich's exhibit A was the wildly overblown 1992 House bank scandal). After Clinton's election, the focus shifted to ridiculing his agenda. "Our technique," Walker explains, "was to convince everybody that there was something in the bill they hated and that they couldn't explain back home. So even if they were willing to go along with one aspect of it, you'd simply go to another aspect and say, 'You don't want to go back home and defend this, do you?'" This strategy was practiced to masterful effect against Clinton's 1994 crime and health-care bills.

Garrett pays surprisingly short shrift to this component of the '94 revolution. Instead, he prefers to cast the Gingrich Republicans as men of positive ideas. "The easy course, the predictable course," Garrett writes, "would have been to resist everything." It is true that they did not. Garrett argues it was their crystal-clear articulation of a bold alternative vision that brought Republicans to power. By the early 1990s, the GOP's young turks had come to realize that they had "to provide an alternative vision of government," as former Armey aide Ed Gillespie explains. The seminal moment, in Garrett's telling, came in 1993 when House Republicans introduced their own highly detailed budget plan. That budget presented the House GOP's core principles: tax cuts, higher defense spending, and deficit reduction through cuts in entitlements, corporate subsidies, and other outlays.

These were hardly new ideas, to be sure. But they did signal a certain gravity and readiness to govern. And the subsequent "Contract with America" added a clever element of accountability. Republicans ingeniously unveiled the Contract in an advertisement in, of all places, *TV Guide*, with the no-nonsense promise, "If we break this contract, throw us out. We mean it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Garrett notes that all the ideas in the Contract polled extremely well, suggesting that Republicans were perfectly in tune with the American public. (Indeed, Gingrich insisted on omitting divisive social issues from the document, leading to some bitter feuding with religious conservative leaders. By contrast, the inclusion of a then-faddish term limits provision was vehemently opposed by many GOP leaders but included for its popularity in what many Republicans consider "the only grossly cynical move in the entire Contract process.")

But just as it's possible to overstate the Gingrich Revolution as a purely negative exercise, as many Democrats do, Garrett oversells the degree to which the "Contract with America" harnessed a popular yearning for the Gingrich agenda. After all, Clinton easily out-dueled the Republicans in the years just after the Contract (although Garrett argues, not implausibly, that Republicans accomplished more in the 1990s than they are usually given credit for). More likely, the Contract was an effective way for Republicans to nationalize an election they hoped would be a referendum against Democratic leaders in Congress and, even more, the early ineptitude of the Clinton presidency. Even Dick Armey tells Garrett that "Hillary's health care plan had more to do with us winning the majority in '94 than the Contract did." As you may recall, the GOP's maniacal opposition to Hillarycare was hardly an intellectually vibrant, positive-idea driven affair.

Garrett would undoubtedly argue—as have conservatives such as Fred Barnes and David Brooks—that Democrats engage in scorched-earth tactics at their own peril; that they must present a clear governing agenda if they are to win back the public's favor and win back the Congress. It's hard to contest the notion that a party needs a sharp and clear message. They can certainly do better than the drab "New Partnership for America's Future," riddled as it was with such banalities as "stronger rural communities"; "support fair wages with good benefits"; "protect our borders"; "honor veterans and their families." A little more of the Contract's concision and specificity certainly would have helped.

House Democrats unveiled the "New Partnership For America's Future" last September. Cue the sound of crickets chirping.

That said, history might have remembered the Contract as just another campaign gimmick if not for the ideological warfare that preceded it. In 1994, voters were ornery and eager to punish Bill Clinton and purge what they'd been told was a corrupt House of Representatives. (The National Rifle Association was also whipping its members into an unprecedented frenzy over the 1993 assault-weapons ban.) Democrats shouldn't be chary about repeating such tactics. With some hard work, smarts, and a little luck, they might even turn George Bush's Social Security "reform" into a repeat of the Hillarycare debacle, with the potential for similar electoral results in 2006.

It makes sense that Republicans would want to congratulate themselves for their grand ideas and patronizingly advise Democrats to follow them. And Democrats certainly should be thinking of new ways to appeal to voters who are drifting to the GOP. But the truth is that the GOP's path to power was at least as negative as it was visionary. Democrats shouldn't forget it.

Michael Crowley is a senior editor at *The New Republic*.

ADVERTISEMENT

Super ExcitingBook News

Highest courts including EUROPEAN Court of Human Rights, Strassbourg, France repelled first internationally suppressed writer's book 'Einstein's Academic Revolution' useful for educated persons in any field.Human Right Defenders and institutions sponsored by Nobel Prize winners in many fields cheated the writer.

Unesco, Paris and UN Human Rights Commission, Geneva are functioning frauds and UK and Australia (Judiciary, Press, Executive and Legislature) are un/constitutional frauds. Related documents are also published

Pages 168
Price U.S. $15.95 including P/P.

Send cheque to :
Mr. K. Kesava Rao,
C/o Bharati Devi,
H.No.9-8-18, Maruti Nagar,
Saidabad, Hyderabad – 500 059,
INDIA.
e-mail : maxborn20@hotmail.com
: kesava_123@yahoo.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

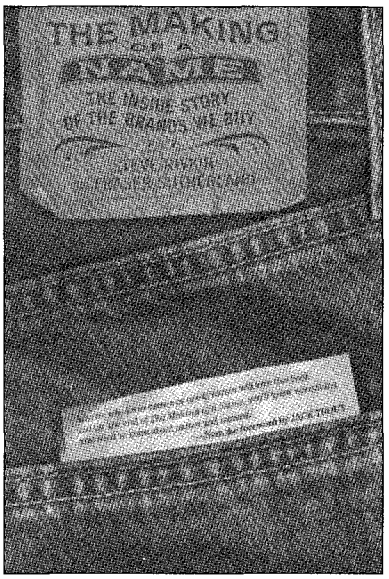
Name Games

Microsoft by any other name would sell as well

By Jamie Malanowski

It's odd that a book about the naming of products would have so misleading a title, but *The Making of a Name: The Inside Story of the Brands We Buy* has bait-and-switch written all over it. Ever since Theodore White poked his notebook behind the scenes of presidential campaigns, the magic words "the making of" have promised readers a definitive explanation of how brainy, stalwart, hard-working people accomplish something of importance—in this case, perhaps, how the people at General Mills thought up the name Wheaties or hipsters at Apple conjured up the moniker iPod. The portentous phrase "Inside Story" that authors Steve Rivkin and Fraser Sutherland have stuck into the subhead certainly reinforces that impression. Well, there's no inside story. In fact, there's no outside story, no beginning, middle, or end. There are not even any characters. It's hard to think of another title that so misses its mark.

The book really should have been called *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Naming Products, Along With Much You Didn't.* It is chock-full of information and examples, indefatigably packaged into types and themes and categories and other time-honored social science boxes that suck the life out of even the most fascinating subjects. The writers—two serious, bespectacled gentlemen sporting distinguished facial hair—tell us that there are so many brand names in America that our landscape is actually...wait for it...a *brandscape.* They apply labels to various types of names: initialized and acronymic names (IBM, Alcoa), allusive names (the Mach3 razor), arbitrary names (Apple), and the coined names currently in vogue (Agilent, Lucent). They write about how names influence—and are influenced by—the other modes of language, and how namers come up with names. "We've taken brand names apart...auditioned the rhetoric of brandspeak...circled and perhaps corralled the topic of brand names' symbolism...sketched the long and short of creating lists of brand name and trade name nominees." And so, so much more. They even invoke morphemes and lexemes, and, just as you're inching for the door, they launch themselves into some of the more fascinating lacunae of trademark law. At least they didn't show home movies.



The Making of a Name: The Inside Story of the Brands We Buy
By Steve Rivkin & Fraser Sutherland
Oxford University Press, $20.00

It's not all boring. There are, for example, several pages in which the authors discuss the perils of transporting brand names across linguistic boundaries, pointing out how Volkswagen's Vento means "fart" in Italian, how Estée Lauder's Country Mist makeup means "manure" in German, and how Powergen, the Italian maker of a battery charger, showed its obtuseness when it insisted on dubbing its Web site www.powergenitalia.com. These *Porky's*-caliber yuks enliven the proceedings considerably.

Amid this wealth of thought and information, Rivkin and Sutherland's central message is that brand names matter. Good names give products memorable identities and suggest an image to consumers. Brand names are so important that there are people (among them, Rivkin) whose jobs consist of thinking them up. Who among us hasn't sat in front of the television, stupefied by some commercial, wondering, "What genius came up with that?" Chances are, it was a now-significantly-wealthier genius. One of these name-conjurers, we learn, was paid $70,000 for advising US Air to change its name to US Airways. Another firm raked in $75,000 from the Infiniti car company for choosing the letters J and Q to go with the company's J30 and Q45 models.

For all that money and attention, however, it's not clear that brand names really make much difference. Rivkin and Sutherland highlight a number of brand names that they admire, such as Windows, the Microsoft operating system that the authors call "inspired," and others they detest, such as Mirant and Agilent, which do not connect to a brand or product in any way. But Windows wasn't a success because it was called Windows. Windows was a success because of Microsoft's brilliant strategy of becoming the operating system in most of the world's computers just as prices dropped and people galloped to the stores to buy the machines. True, Windows was a felicitous and even elegant choice of a name for the operating system, but does anyone doubt that Microsoft could have called it the Mirant operating system or the Agilent operating system, without anyone batting an eye? Think about that era: We all had to learn a whole lot of new words, many of them illogical and stupid, including Microsoft itself. A rose by any

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other name is still a rose.

Or take another favorite of the authors': Viagra. Rivkin and Sutherland can hardly contain their admiration for Pfizer's brilliance in naming its love drug. "Because *Viagra* rhymes with *Niagara*, it suggests splendid vigor and a natural marvel. It begins with a voiced fricative and suggests speed and power (*velocity*, *vroom*)... The sonorant *r* is voiced and implies the fullness of *roundness*, *resonance*, and *rolling*." Be that as it may, let's come down to earth. We're talking about a drug that restores sexual potency to middle-aged men, an item as close to a fountain of youth as civilization has yet invented. Pfizer could have called the drug anything short of Childmolesta and guys would have taken it.

Names are useful and interesting, but Rivkin and Sutherland overvalue them in the general scheme of things. The quality of the product is crucial. People will learn the name Schwarzenegger if they like enough Schwarzenegger movies. Over the years, Ford has produced minivans it has called Aerostar, Windstar, and Freestar; none of those names has mattered as much as confidence in the Ford brand itself. For years, my family used a margarine called I Can't Believe It's Not Butter! It wasn't because we couldn't believe it wasn't butter; that was completely believable. It was because they flooded the Sunday papers with 35-cent coupons. Later, we switched to Promise margarine, a name so vague that you can imagine it being used on everything from dog food to mouthwash. We switched because some nutritionist said that while all the margarines were filled with dangerous triglycerides, Promise probably had the fewest. In my mind, Promise immediately became renamed I Can't Believe My Arteries Aren't Clogged with Glop.

There's no question that Rivkin and Sutherland have thought long and deeply about brand names, and they offer more than a few insights. They have amassed what is essentially a museum catalogue devoted to their passions; and while intermittently interesting, a lively read it is not.

Jamie Malanowski is a writer in New York.

Riches to Rags

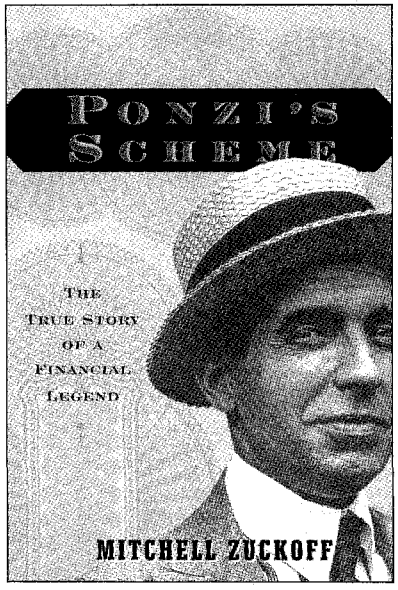
How legendary fraud Charles Ponzi's schemes crumbled.

By Brendan I. Koerner

A successful scam consists of two essential parts: the fraud and the getaway. An ill-gotten fortune, no matter how spectacular, isn't very useful if it can only be spent on cigarettes and candy bars at the prison commissary. So a competent con artist will figure out from square one not only how to part the suckers from their cash, but also how to disappear when the inevitable end becomes imminent.

Casual fans of flim-flam history are already aware that Charles Ponzi, whose surname is now synonymous with "pyramid scheme," couldn't dodge the law when his financial house of cards collapsed in 1920. The pint-sized immigrant from Lugo, Italy, born Carlos Pietro Giovanni Gugliemlo Tebaldo Ponzi, never went on the lam, nor did he try to hide his fortune from investigators. He was incarcerated then deported, and spent his final years living in penury in Brazil, dying with $75 in his bank account. Hardly a post-scam résumé worthy of the Hucksters Hall of Fame.

It's easy to interpret Ponzi's failure to abscond with the loot as an indicator that he was only half a scammer—excellent at the fraud part of the equation, but not so strong on the endgame. But Mitchell Zuckoff offers a different take in the terrific *Ponzi's Scheme: The True Story of a Financial Legend*, portraying the man as more delusional than criminal. His Ponzi never fled because, like Enron's Kenneth Lay or WorldCom's

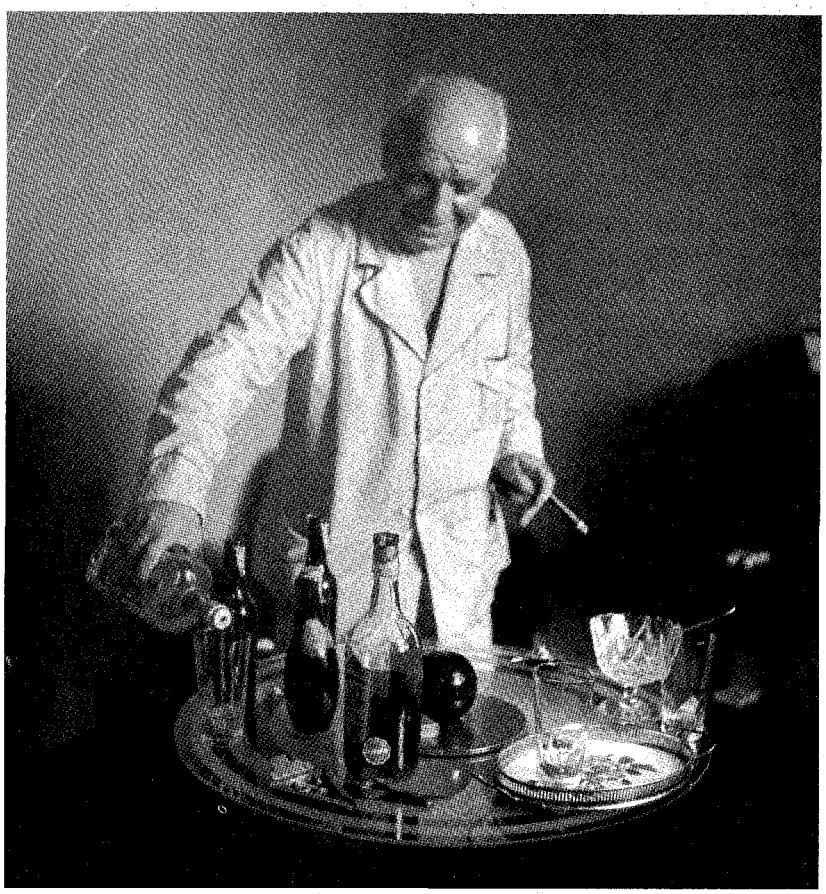


Ponzi's Scheme: The True Story of a Financial Legend
By Mitchell Zuckoff
Random House, $25.95

Bernard Ebbers, he somehow convinced himself that he could forestall the day of reckoning long enough to make a buck for his investors. His real sin was similar to that of so many failed CEOs of the past few years: Ponzi bought into his own spiel and decided that words were more important than facts.

The whole tale seems ludicrous to modern readers, given our day-to-day familiarity with real-estate infomercials and emails promising a slice of Mobutu Sese Seko's riches. We're trained to be wary of too-good-to-be-true offers—a company peddling mortgage rates of 3 percent is obviously not on the up-and-up. Bostonians in 1920, alas, weren't quite as sharp when it came to separating opportunity from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Millionaire and legendary fraud Charles Ponzi before his schemes crumbled.

swindle. This was the era in which, much like the mid-to-late 1990s, securities speculation seemed the road to wealth for Everyman, and federal regulation was still virtually non-existent. Ponzi did especially well by targeting people like himself, immigrants and blue-collar sorts who felt entitled to the same financial perks as Boston's patricians.

Zuckoff brings this undercurrent of class conflict front and center by interweaving Ponzi's tale with that of his blue-blooded nemesis, *Boston Post* editor Richard Grozier. Unlike Ponzi, who had to scrape through lean years working menial jobs and enduring a few prison stints, Grozier was the stereotypical scion of privilege—his father edited the paper before him, and Richard ascended to the job despite disastrous careers at Exeter and Harvard. Grozier was exactly the sort of man that Ponzi's immigrant investors detested, an aristocrat whose very status seemed more Old World than New. This was America, after all, where the streets were supposedly paved with gold (a cliché that, Zuckoff notes, inspired Ponzi himself to set sail for the United States in 1903). Didn't the little guy deserve to profit from the nation's post-World War I boom, too?

Ponzi's trademark scheme was, in fact, pegged to World War I's deleterious effects on European currencies. As Zuckoff expertly explains, his subject's eureka moment came while examining an International Reply Coupon, a certificate meant to facilitate the flow of mail between countries. Back then, countries did not recognize one another's stamps, so there was no such thing as the self-addressed, stamped envelope for transatlantic letters. To remedy this problem, an arcane international body called the Universal Postal Union had invented the coupons, which could be redeemed for local stamps. A sender in France would buy a coupon, include it in his mailing to the United States, and the American recipient would redeem it for stamps at an American post office.

Ponzi, who had just failed to launch a business-to-business advertising guide, saw the International Reply Coupon as an ingenious way to take advantage of Europe's post-war chaos. The coupon's inventors had made the error of fixing the values long before World War I caused a nosedive in European currency valuations. "By redeeming [the coupons] in Boston rather than Barcelona," writes Zuckoff, "Ponzi would earn a profit before expenses of ten cents, or ten percent on each dollar's worth of coupons he bought in Spain and redeemed in the United States." And the Italian lira had suffered even worse than the Spanish peseta. Ponzi dreamed of conjuring up his contacts in his native land, having them ship over coupons by the boatload, and making a killing.

It was just the sort of arbitrage play that might warm George Soros's heart. Except that Ponzi made one critical miscalculation—the coupons could only be redeemed for stamps, not cash. Ponzi initially believed there was some way around this and began issuing certificates to investors that promised a 50-percent return on principal after 90 days. Even after it became clear that no bank or post office would monetize the coupons—the Universal Postal Union went so far as to issue a statement making clear that the vouchers were not intended for speculation—Ponzi went right on accepting investments at his School Street headquarters. And as the money rolled in, a combination of avarice and fear compelled him to perpetuate the fraud, rather than admit that ruin was the inevitable outcome.

The earliest investors, of course, were the lucky ones. As the people at the top of the pyramid, they were paid their returns out of the principals anted up by latecomers. But Zuckoff argues that Ponzi thought he'd only have to rob Peter to pay Paul in the short term, and that eventually he'd figure out a way to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

make good on his wild promises. He was a shyster, for sure, but not quite the evildoer of the popular imagination. Once it became clear that his postal coupon strategy would never work, he thought he could stall as he worked out a new get-rich-quick scheme.

Zuckoff bolsters this more sympathetic take on Ponzi by delving deep into the man's troubled background. Ponzi came from upper-middle-class stock but had washed out of a Roman university thanks to his fondness for late-night parties and gambling. He lived a rough-and-tumble, itinerant life during much of his time in America, occasionally finding a white-collar job that suited his natural intelligence. But he was a born bumbler. He was involved in a shady bank failure in Montreal, for example, though Zuckoff suggests that Ponzi may have been the fall guy for higher ups. He also served time in a relatively cushy federal penitentiary in Atlanta for helping bring several illegal immigrants over the border from Canada. Again, Zuckoff argues that Ponzi got a bum rap and was merely the victim of circumstance and anti-Italian prejudice.

In his efforts to humanize his infamous subject, Zuckoff even goes so far as to dredge up a tale from Ponzi's days as a nurse to injured miners. Without prompting or reward, he volunteered large swaths of his flesh, so a severely burned woman whom he barely knew could receive critical skin grafts. Not exactly the sort of sacrifice to be expected from a truly larcenous soul.

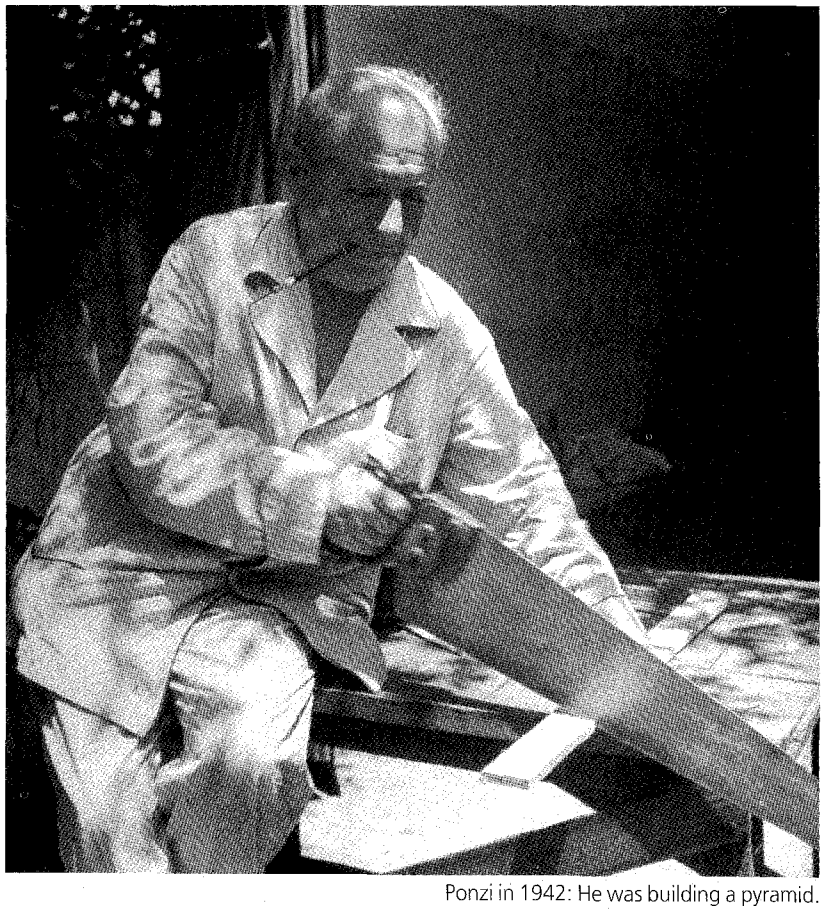
Though his currency speculation scheme was truly harebrained, Ponzi was not without his talents. He wasn't the first to use pyramid tactics, but he added some clever flourishes, such as employing early investors to recruit new marks—the foundation for what is now referred to as multi-level marketing. In an even more modern stroke, Ponzi also hired himself a public-relations mouthpiece, an ex-reporter named William McMasters, who deftly assuaged a skeptical media—at least for a few months. (Ponzi would come to regret the hire when McMasters figured out that his boss was essentially insolvent and ratted to the press.)

Ponzi's Securities Exchange Company—the irony of the venture's acronym surely wasn't lost on post-Black Tuesday regulators—made him a very, very wealthy man, rich enough to purchase his own bank, several food producers, and a mansion in a tony Boston suburb. Some Bostonians even hoped that the immigrant millionaire would take the Red Sox off the hands of Harry Frazee, the owner who had traded away Babe Ruth earlier in 1920. They'd rather have a hero like Ponzi at the helm than the man who sold baseball's greatest player in order to finance his girlfriend's flop of a musical.

There's no doubt that Ponzi's scheme was doomed to fail from the start, but its demise was hastened by Richard Grozier's *Boston Post*. Struggling to emerge from his father's considerable shadow, Grozier saw Ponzi as his own version of the International Reply Coupon, a clever shortcut to his ultimate goal of turning the *Post* into Boston's preeminent newspaper. Like its competitors, the *Post* initially flubbed the story, writing meaningless puff, but Grozier quickly became suspicious of the popular Ponzi. He sicced his best reporters on the case, and they made mincemeat of their target.

The hoi polloi who admired Ponzi, however, didn't believe the *Post*'s takedowns at first. The SEC's investors were the sorts of folks who were shut out from more conventional avenues of investment, and most suspected that the Harvard set was furious that Ponzi had outsmarted them. Better to trust the self-made man, they figured, than the one with a silver spoon dangling from his mouth.

Yet class antagonism can only blind people from the truth for so long, and the *Post*'s discovery that



Ponzi in 1942: He was building a pyramid.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ponzi had been involved in the Montreal bank failure was the final nail in his coffin. After his arrest, it quickly became apparent that Ponzi was at least $3 million short, and that the poor latecomers might have been better served by using their hard-earned cash as winter kindling. The folk hero Ponzi ended up in the clink and, eventually, on a boat back to Italy; the aristocrat Grozier and his staff nabbed a Pulitzer.

The inevitability of the scheme's outcome doesn't diminish from Zuckoff's book, which is paced more like a detective novel than a skilled work of financial journalism. Zuckoff took great pains to sift through the primary sources of the day, particularly court transcripts and newspaper accounts, and his details are impressive. Anyone who has ever wondered about Charles Ponzi's views on human sexual proclivities need look no further. A strict historian might quibble with Zuckoff's recreations of conversations that no one recorded, such as an exchange between Ponzi and legendary boxer "Gentleman Jim" Corbett, but they ring true enough.

Above all, Zuckoff successfully pushes *Ponzi* beyond mere biography by making Grozier a co-star. This is not simply a common tale of greed gone wrong but rather a small window onto America's economic rise and collapse over the 1920s. After World War I, people like Ponzi's dupes looked around at the wealth being created by the elite and asked, "Why not us?" Unfortunately, people as self-deluded and incompetent as Ponzi—and often far more malicious and powerful—were only too willing to answer that question with a resounding, "Why, no reason at all. If you trust me completely." That answer, and the naïveté of the investors who heeded it, played no small part in bringing economic cataclysm at decade's end.

Brendan I. Koerner is a contributing editor at *Wired* and a fellow at the New America Foundation.

The Good Fight

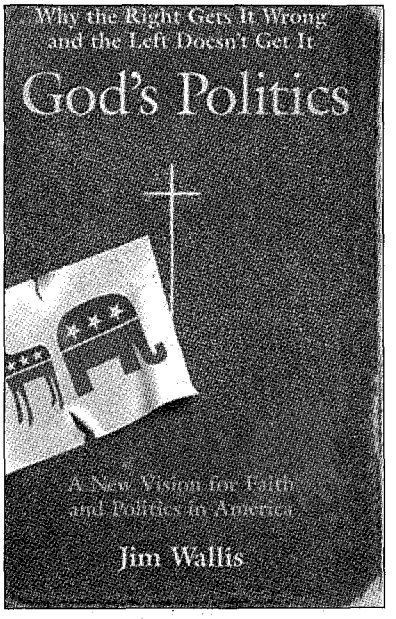
How much longer can the religious left remain politically neutral?

By Amy Sullivan

Let us read, brothers and sisters, from the Gospel of Karl, chapter 20, verse 4. "And lo, in those days, the man they called Rove did proclaim, 'I shall find those lost four million evangelical voters and I shall shepherd them to the polls.' The call went far and wide, throughout the lands of wheat and sugar, in every hill and valley, and the people did hear. They phone-banked, and caucused, and lobbied their neighbors about capital gains tax cuts. And on the first Tuesday of the eleventh month, they voted."

By now, it's become gospel truth that the mobilization of religious conservatives won the 2004 election for George W. Bush. The grassroots base rallied around hot-button issues like gay marriage while the president conducted a more moderate campaign nationwide, and they provided a cushion of votes in the red states that drove up his popular vote total. Amid the flurry of activity on the religious right that preceded Election Day, what was the religious left doing?

Well, here's a taste. On the morning of Nov. 1, the day before the election—a highly competitive presidential election—I opened my inbox to see a press release from the once-venerable National Council of Churches (NCC), an umbrella organization for liberal, mainline denominations. Religious organizations—like other non-profits—are subject to all manner of complicated rules regarding how political they can be, particularly in the weeks before an election. Even so, I expected a pre-election press release to have some bearing on the decision facing the country. I was wrong. "NCC Urges U.S. to Accept Responsibility for Uighur Chinese Refugees at Guantanamo," read the headline. I have no doubt that advocacy on behalf of Chinese Muslim prisoners is a worthy cause; I also have no doubt that it confirms the irrelevance of the once-powerful religious left.



God's Politics
By Jim Wallis
Harper San Francisco, $24.95

Which is why the recent emergence of Jim Wallis as the public face of the religious left has been such a welcome development for many progressives who are also people of faith. An ordained minister in the American Baptist Church, Wallis is the founder of *Sojourners* magazine and the progressive movement Call to Renewal. In the last few months he has faced Tim Russert's queries on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Meet the Press," chatted up Jon Stewart on "The Daily Show," discussed poverty with Charlie Rose, and mused about faith and politics with Terry Gross on NPR's "Fresh Air." And now he's released his latest book, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*, which debuted on *The New York Times*' bestseller list and in the number two slot on Amazon.com. Wallis's ambitions are grander than just writing a bestselling book—he wants to energize a religious movement in this country to rival the influence of the religious right. Can Wallis stop the decline of the religious left? Only if he wants to.

Not the liberal Pat Robertson

Whenever he is in front of an audience, one of Wallis's favorite bits is to ask: How can you recognize a politician in Washington? He then licks his index finger and holds it up. "They're the ones walking around with their fingers in the air to see which way the wind is blowing," he says. For those of us who believe public service is a noble profession, it can be an annoying gambit. But it's more than just an anti-establishment rant. Wallis' point, he goes on to explain, is simple—Stop blaming politicians and start changing the wind.

God's Politics is part argument for why the wind needs to be changed and part manual for how to change it. The book reads like a sermon by a minister who has learned that the best way to keep his congregation from falling asleep is to break up the theology with anecdotes and provide plenty of lists for parishioners to scribble down in the margins of their bulletins. Sprinkled among timeless lessons from the likes of Habakkuk and Amos are stories from Wallis's time on the front lines of poverty—for 30 years, he has lived in one of Washington, D.C.'s most violent neighborhoods—and from his travels around the country to build a vibrant progressive religious movement, as well as his frustrating encounters with political establishments on the right and the left. The lists are meant to outline progressive religious principles: the Six-Point Plan for Iraq, Ten Lessons to Defeat Terrorism, Ten Lessons for Understanding and Surviving War, Eight Millennium Development Goals, and, as a conclusion, 50 Predictions for the 21st Century.

As a long-time advocate for the poor who was leading faith-based organizations decades before George W. Bush ever heard the phrase, Wallis has the street cred and moral authority to make his case. To liberals who believe that religion has no place in public life, Wallis argues that "God is personal, but never private," citing Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Joshua Heschel, and other moral crusaders whose names warm the hearts of good lefties. To conservatives, Wallis says that their attempts to apply religious solutions to policy problems—from terrorism to Iraq to the economy to abortion—have betrayed Christian principles of justice, mercy, and humility. Both sides, he charges, have done wrong by religion. Republicans have hijacked faith in the name of divisive causes that fail to help the neediest, and Democrats have largely avoided discussion of religion altogether.

This is the main take-away point from *God's Politics*, and in that respect, it is not terribly different from two of Wallis's previous books, *The Soul of Politics* and *Who Speaks for God?* But—if the number of times I am asked by people from both parties how I can be both a Christian and a Democrat is any indication—it's a message that bears repeating.

One of the reasons Wallis is just now attracting notice is that he's hard to categorize. In a media world that thinks in terms of conflict and neat, tidy boxes, he doesn't quite fit. Wallis is pro-life but anti-war. He challenges the role of Hollywood in promoting "coarse entertainment" and the role of Enron in violating a basic compact with its workers. On balance—particularly given his commitment above all to the elimination of poverty—Wallis's sympathies are more in line with Democratic policies and values. But he does not, he stresses, want to become the liberal equivalent of Pat Robertson. "The media like to say, 'Oh, then you must be the religious Left,'" he writes. "No, not at all, and the very question is the problem. Just because a religious Right has fashioned itself for political power in one utterly predictable ideological guise does not mean that those who question this political seduction must be their opposite political counterpart. The best public contribution of religion is precisely not to be ideologically predictable or a loyal partisan."

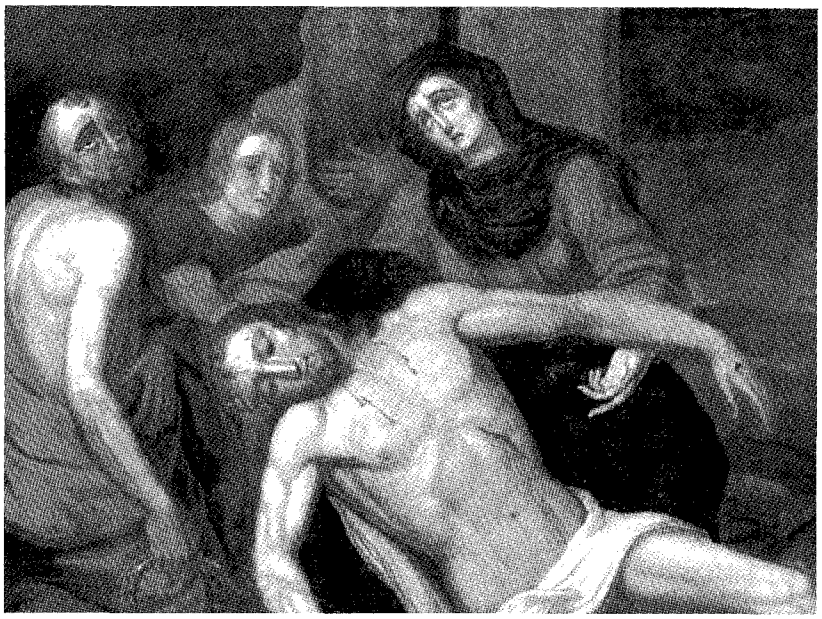
And he's right. Politics and religion are both best served when religious leaders and communities maintain their prophetic independence. The role set by the Hebrew prophets, Wallis's most oft-mentioned models, is a critically important one—"Who will uphold the dignity of economic and political outcasts? Who will question the self-righteousness of nations and their leaders? Who will not allow God's name to be used simply to justify ourselves, instead of calling us to accountability?" Indeed, it's hard to speak truth to power when your fondest wish is to rub shoulders with power at the negotiating table or cocktail parties. What's more, history—including just the past few decades—is replete with examples of how a too-close relationship between the worlds of religion and politics can bring out the worst of both.

The tie that binds

In an ideal world, religious leaders would maintain some distance from the world of politics. But this is not an ideal world. The reality of American politics today is that religious conservatives have inextricably aligned themselves with one political party. If religious progressives are not at the negotiating table, it's not as if their absence is palpable—it's just that much easier to ignore their concerns.

Religious conservatives understand this reality. For most of American history, conservative Christians focused primarily on the effort of sav-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



John Valentine Haidt's "Lamentation over the body of Christ," oil on canvas, 1758

ing souls, and made a principled decision to stay out of the realm of politics. "Preachers are not called upon to be politicians," the Rev. Jerry Falwell explained in 1965, "but soul winners. Nowhere are we commissioned to reform the externals." During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a perfect storm developed that changed the political landscape forever. Supreme Court decisions banning school prayer and Bible-reading from public schools angered conservative evangelicals, and convinced them that government would not remain neutral, allowing them to simply live as they wished. Similarly, many Catholics—who had largely stayed away from politics while assimilating amid anti-Catholicism—were outraged by the *Roe v. Wade* decision and developed into a politically active force. Both of these groups were embraced by Republican strategists who realized that they needed to form a cohesive electoral block if they were ever going to become a political majority.

At the same time, the religious left, once a powerful actor in liberal politics (think abolition, suffrage, the progressive era, civil rights), began to decline. The National Council of Churches played a central organizing role in the civil rights movement, but lost its way soon after, dispersing its attention over what seemed like 87 different policy issues—the plight of Chinese prisoners at Guantanamo just the latest of them. Many well-intentioned members of the religious left, not wanting to be associated with the nascent Christian Right, filtered religion out of their rhetoric and secularized some of their appeals. As groups like the Christian Coalition and Moral Majority became ever more vocal and visible, the conventional wisdom that to be religious and in politics was to be conservative hardened, and—with a few notable exceptions, such as Mario Cuomo and Bill Clinton—religious progressives stayed in the closet.

Conservatives have an important natural advantage. The tie that binds them is the belief that government should stay out of their lives. Although each constituency has its own specific hobby horses, for the most part they manage to stand united behind this one simple principle, which leads to scenes like the Christian Coalition lobbying for capital gains tax cuts (because, of course, the ABCs of moral concerns are abortion, buggery, and capital gains taxes). But while it's relatively easy to bring people together to oppose something—particularly if you're not above using scare tactics and telling them they are a persecuted minority—mobilizing organizations to support government intervention on a variety of fronts is much more difficult.

Wallis has been responsible for trying to coax religious lefties to wade back into political debate, and he's been most effective when challenging the perception that "faith" is defined only as that practiced by George W. Bush or Ralph Reed. When, as a young congressional staffer, I read Wallis's *The Soul of Politics* at the recommendation of my minister, I found for the first time someone who voiced my frustration—the religious right didn't speak for me and the political left didn't let me speak. I ended up in divinity school. Other readers have been equally moved—although with perhaps less dramatic results: This past fall, while conservative churches were busy turning over their membership directories to the Republican National Committee, Wallis raised $400,000 in two months for a campaign that ran full-page ads featuring the words "God is Not a Republican. Or a Democrat" in *The New York Times* during the Republican Convention and in the hometown newspapers of James Dobson, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson.

It's a start. In order to truly be heard, however, Wallis and his compatriots need to face what they're up against—a conservative machine that uses two-way communication between religious communities and political institutions to coordinate policy and rhetoric. With the stakes high for issues they care about, religious progressives may have to set aside the pristine white choir robes for a time and get their hands dirty in practical politics. Wallis has written a splendid blueprint for a utopian faith movement, but it may mean very little if he and other progressive religious leaders maintain a chaste distance from the party inclined to act on their concerns. What they've chosen so far is the principled stand that protects religion. But if they want to protect the values they hold dear, and the country they love, they're going to have to start fighting the good fight.

Amy Sullivan is an editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

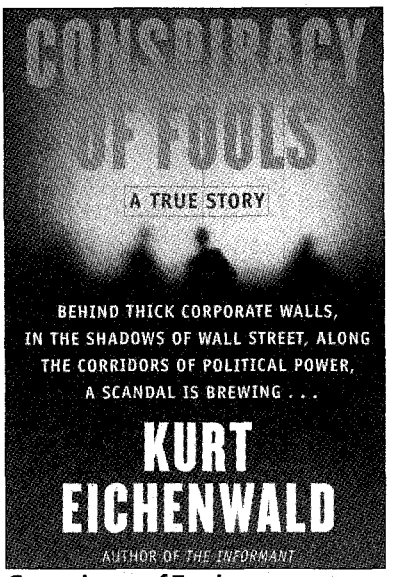
Ignorance Is Bliss?

Ken Lay may have been as clueless as his lawyers claim. It shouldn't matter.

By Marianne Lavelle

When Enron collapsed three years ago, it was reasonable to anticipate the story that would one day be told of how the nation's seventh-largest company lost its way. Maybe the once-lean energy machine had bloated up on dot-com excess until it burst. Or perhaps California's insane electricity deregulation scheme and its lure of easy money had crazed corporate executives in Houston who were otherwise sane. But in *Conspiracy of Fools*, Kurt Eichenwald leaves no doubt that the criminal enterprise and deranged mismanagement at Enron were firmly established years before the tech boom peaked or rolling blackouts dimmed the Golden State.

Of course, one cannot help but ask whether many people will want to read 750 more pages on the late, unlamented giant. Other purportedly definitive accounts of the Enron saga were published more than a year ago, not to mention the ink that was spilled during the scandal's unfolding and subsequent probes and trials. For all that, Eichenwald's meticulously research-ed volume will captivate readers beyond those poor souls (myself, alas, among them) who still can't get enough of the Enron tale. His book is chilling exploration of how far down the road to destruction any venture can travel when a collection of supremely self-assured but wrongheaded minds are given enough power. (Some readers might discern parallels, for instance, with governments past or present.) And it's also a really good read.



Conspiracy of Fools
By Kurt Eichenwald
Broadway, $26.00

Eichenwald, who spent three years covering the scandal for *The New York Times*, too kindly uses the word "fools" to describe the characters who built up and brought down Enron. Other terms would have been apt: lunatics, greedsters, idiots.

Former Chief Executive Officer Jeff Skilling comes across as a man barely holding it together. Long before the year he both took on and abdicated Enron's top post, he was drinking too much wine, putting on extra pounds, spiraling into bouts of depression and self-pity, and veering between overweening ambition and an impulse to cast aside his career. In one weird scene, he compulsively punches his console to pick up every ringing phone on the floor during an interview with a prospective executive employee. Yet none of the calls are for him; he just transfers them as if he's the receptionist.

The aspect of Skilling's dysfunction most relevant to Enron's demise, however, was his inclination to treat the ability to perceive bad news as a sign of weakness or stupidity. He blasts employees who tell him money can't be made in the retail electricity business, or that *this* loss must be reported in *this* upcoming quarter. And because nearly everyone around Skilling wanted to please him (and the cutthroat compensation system he set up gave every reason to want to do so), fewer and fewer inconvenient realities made their way across his desk. It was the perfect medium for the rise of Andrew Fastow, the perpetual good-news man, creative enough to find a way of doing any deal, making any transaction appear profitable, pulling off the impossible every time.

Fastow's method, it is now well-known, was brazen fraud, through which he swindled millions for himself on the side. Press accounts have too often portrayed Fastow as a whiz kid or numbers genius. Eichenwald shows that, quite to the contrary, colleagues were regularly astonished by Fastow's second-rate intellect. Before his ascent to chief financial officer, underlings tried to teach him why a lack of cash flow jeopardized Enron's credit rating, but it was "like teaching basic swimming to the new lifeguard." He blithely entered deals depending on future market conditions without accounting for the most basic risk posed by interest rate changes. He sought advice on how a hedge—a financial device used to protect against the drop in value of a stock or other asset—could be used to avoid ordinary business losses. If

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

such a hedge existed, replied Enron risk analyst Vince Kaminski, why bother having customers—"We can all just make money by hedging." Fastow appeared to absorb this comment without its intended irony. One of a core group of admirable characters in the book is that Cassandra figure, Kaminski, unheeded when early on he labeled the off-the-books partnerships an "idea so stupid that only Andy Fastow could have come up with it."

Eichenwald's book unfolds like a suspense novel, albeit an amply footnoted one, making it a more enjoyable read than previous Enron books. In *The Smartest Guys in the Room*, Bethany McLean and Peter Elkind of *Fortune* magazine devoted a mere handful of sentences to the warming tale of how Fastow very rapidly failed at running Enron's retail electricity business. Eichenwald's account brings to life, page after page, the mounting distress in the office while Fastow flounders with the task of producing the business plan. Pretty scary, when you realize this fiasco is just a stepping-stone on his path to chief financial officer.

Eichenwald makes his own attempt to pierce the enigma of the man who allowed Fastow and his schemes to flourish—former Enron Chairman Kenneth Lay, who faces trial soon on charges that he lied to investors and the public as the company entered its death spiral in late 2001. Lay has given every indication that he will employ an "I was duped" defense. As much as it gnaws at the soul to think of Enron's top guy eluding responsibility on such grounds, evidence of his cluelessness apparently will be easy for his legal team to muster. Lay gives new meaning to the phrase "believing one's own press" when he swells with pride that Fastow was being considered "CFO of the Year" by *CFO* magazine, a feat engineered entirely by the Enron public relations team at Fastow's prodding. One colleague notices in conversations that Lay's information about Enron was "years out of date," and concludes this world traveler and glad-hander was "not up to running things." Lay's genial and uncomprehending façade doesn't crack until he learns that the director of one Enron partnership doing dirty deals was Fastow's assistant's gay lover. "What the fuck is going on here?" he demands, far too late.

Since the author's technique involves getting inside the heads of key players, a la Bob Woodward, even a casual reading triggers the parlor game of guessing who talked to Eichenwald. It's a significant question, because the book unequivocally portrays Fastow as a criminal while remaining agnostic to the culpability of the befuddled Lay and off-kilter Skilling. Of course, this may be in part because Fastow has pleaded guilty while the law's judgment has yet to fall on his former bosses. But the reader is left with the nagging suspicion that Eichenwald pulls his punches concerning the men at the top because he relied on their cooperation to pull the Enron story together. That is unsatisfying on two levels. First, the book fails to fix responsibility on the corporate chieftains, despite the fact that it was clearly their duty to know what was going on. And at the same time, it's unclear if readers can trust the portions of Eichenwald's Enron story that appear to be told through a useful mist of Lay and Skilling's bewilderment.

The author's notes say only that his research involved "more than one thousand hours of interviews with more than one hundred sources and thousands of documents;" as with other Enron books and stories, the figures remain anonymous while the lawsuits and criminal trials drag on. But when Eichenwald recounts what Jeff Skilling is thinking when he's alone prone on the bed of a hotel room crying—not an unusual posture for him, by the way—well, how many other witnesses could there be?

As for the emotions emanating from the solitary Lay, they seem too mild and self-serving to be anything but self-reported. He was disappointed that Vice President Cheney's energy task force didn't do more for Enron, irritated with the first questions raised on Wall Street over Enron's accounting practices, and felt that some in the media were on a crusade against the company. In other words: no schemer, he. But Eichenwald throws cold water on attempts at source speculation, noting he relied on documents and testimony more heavily than interviews. He warns ponderously: "Readers should not assume that any individual participant in a conversation is the source of the statements or even among the sources." Spoilsport.

Ultimately, the success of the risky nonfiction-as-novel method rests on the quality of the research. And here, one has to be impressed at the new details Eichenwald has unearthed from the well-trampled Enron story. Eichenwald's interviews delved deeply enough that he can show readers Fastow as those around him saw him, with the anxious tics of a crook, whistling his words when he's nervous, pulling his collar, stretching his neck, squinching his face.

Even more impressively, Eichenwald knows Enron's far-flung operations well enough to interweave the tale of what was happening in Houston with contemporaneous Enron disasters in other parts of the world: a deadly explosion at a Puerto Rican natural gas affiliate that had been warned its workers were poorly trained; the panic that ensued when Enron took over a utility in Argentina, culminating with workers trashing the offices and destroying the company's billing system. The pace of the vignettes quickens at the end of 1999 as Enron accelerates its schemes to meet earnings target: "All it took was paper shuffling, accounting errors and some sweetheart deals. That, and a few crimes."

Eichenwald also takes some of the sheen off Enron whistleblower

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sherron Watkins, whom he says ventured far afield of her personal knowledge in her testimony before Congress. In Watkins's own book, she mentions how she congratulated Fastow's replacement and offered her help. Eichenwald, however, quotes from her email at length, showing it to be short on congratulations and long on efforts to advance her own career and criticize "all these latecomers joining the band wagon" questioning Enron's accounting. Watkins developed a reputation as the lead Enron whistleblower and shared a *Time* cover with the FBI's Coleen Rowley and WorldCom's Cynthia Cooper as "Persons of the Year." In fact, the book's most powerful disclosure is that, long before Watkins, more than a half-dozen figures inside Enron and its late accounting firm, Arthur Andersen, were trying to warn that the company was drifting into dangerous waters. Nine months before the bankruptcy, one mid-level analyst, Kevin Kindall, delivered a report to the treasurer that identified the precise off-books arrangements that would fail and exactly how that would trigger a company-wide crisis, "as if an unknown engineer at the White Star Line had laid out the dangers of icebergs to the Titanic." Neither Lay nor Skilling would hear this or any of the other reports of pending doom, because the organization they created, like so many others, wouldn't permit dissent from the grand vision they created.

No one will stop the presses for these revelations now. But at a time when the quality of journalism has been so degraded by the competition to be fast, brief and shocking (and *The New York Times* knows something of this), there's great virtue in Eichenwald's approach to the most important business story of our time. It took time to write. It takes time to read. It won't surprise you, but it will offer much to contemplate.

Marianne Lavelle is a senior writer covering business for *U.S. News & World Report*.

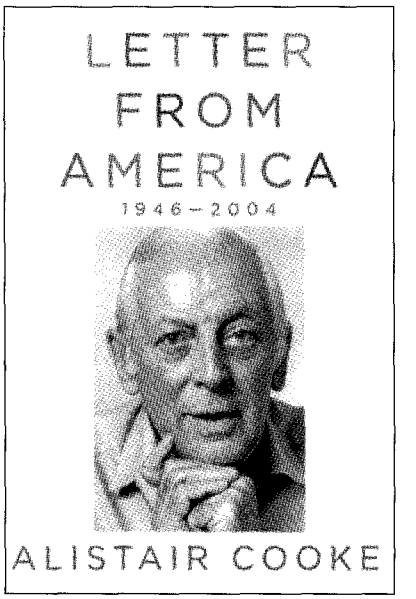
The Observer; The Independent; The Guardian

Remembering Alistair Cooke.

By Daniel Schorr

"The second Bush fairy tale," Alistair Cooke called it. Propped up in bed on Feb. 20, 2004, six weeks before his death, Cooke wrote the last of 58 years worth of weekly "Letter[s] from America" for the BBC that brought alive his adopted homeland for the country of his birth. In this final essay, he recalled the first Gulf War, so "briskly fought" by President George H.W. Bush, the "heroic warrior-king." But, thereupon seeking reelection, Bush was "handsomely defeated by a nationally unknown former Governor of Arkansas, a Southern state which had never before been the cradle of a President." President Clinton was undone by his affair with Monica Lewinsky, "a figure of fate as significant as Napoleon's mistress Madame Walewska." And by the time it was his turn to deal with a menacing Iraq, Clinton "didn't possess the moral authority to invade Long Island."

Then came "the second Bush fairy tale." The young Bush won a "swift and picturesque victory" over Saddam Hussein, only to run into the "unexpected weight and range and murderous force" of Iraqi opposition. The testimony of Chief Weapons Inspector David Kay—



Letter from America 1946-2004
By Alistair Cooke
Alfred A. Knopf, $35.00

"We got it all wrong"—had the effect of driving "a stake in the heart of the administration's main declared reason for going into Iraq."

And now, nine months before the election, Cooke observed Sen. John Kerry's (D-Mass.) "odd and lonely boast" that Bush would be driven from the White House, and "I'm the man to do it." Perhaps the essayist, with his sense of America, thought that Kerry would really win. But, artfully, he hedged his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LEGAL SEA FOODS

Taste the Legal Difference

We could **tell** you our seafood is the freshest,
But we'd rather **prove** it.

LEGAL SEA FOODS
established 1950
RESTAURANT • OYSTER BAR

If it isn't fresh, it isn't Legal!

704 7th Street NW . 2020 K Street NW . Reagan National Airport
Tysons Galleria . Crystal City
800-EAT-FISH · www.LEGALSEAFOODS.com

bets and avoided a prediction.

These fragmentary quotations can only begin to convey the style with which this informed and scholarly journalist reduced complicated events into prose understandable across the ocean. You will gather that I am, and have long been, an Alistair Cooke enthusiast. Full disclosure requires me to note that we were of the same generation (he was born in 1908, eight years before me). We shared a love for radio, the most intimate form of communication. And as a foreign correspondent during much of my career, I appreciate the challenge of making a foreign country understandable to an audience back home.

As has been said of Edward R. Murrow, Alistair Cooke was made for radio and radio for him. Leafing through this treasure trove of essays on a wide variety of aspects of American life, I could almost hear the measured tones with which he delivered his observations. His first BBC essay in the collection, from 1946, was about the immigrant strain in American life (he himself was a naturalized American, educated at Cambridge, Harvard, and Yale). Throughout his career, his commentary on America was sometimes critical, but always affectionate.

He wrote of Damon Runyon and his own unique development of American vernacular: "Damon Runyon's slang is as contrived and romantic as Dickens." He wrote of boxer Joe Louis, whom he came to know: "I know it is hard, perhaps impossible, for any white man to appraise the character of any Negro."

Of the federal capital in 1949: "You'll see that it's impossible to talk about Washington without getting preoccupied with the government and its buildings. But that's because there's practically nothing else. Washington is not a capital like London.... And so as the sun sinks into the Tidal Basin... excuse me, I have just time to make the fast train up to Babylon-on-the-Hudson." Of racial segregation, a subject that seemed to often occupy Cooke: "So, in the South, and in the Deep South most of all, the mere force of numbers is a threat, if only in the minds of men, to the political and social dominance of the white man."

Of H.L. Mencken, one of the many American celebrities whom Cooke came to know: "As old age came on he was noticeably more tolerant, even of types he abominated, like evangelists, city politicians and golfers." Of the assassination of President Kennedy: "We have been cheated, in a moment, by a wild but devilishly accurate stroke of the promise of what we had begun to call the Age of Kennedy."

And, about 9/11: "So, the first thing I felt was, 'this is a war. It's here. It's happening to us.'... It is the same feeling of bewilderment and secret fear (what next?) that Londoners felt after the first night of the Blitz, in September 1940."

To dip into these essays is to relive a half-century with a particularly civilized observer. In his introduction, Simon Jenkins says that Cooke "perfected the journalism of personal witness, adapting it brilliantly to the medium of radio." I'll buy that.

Daniel Schorr is Senior News Analyst for National Public Radio. For two decades, he reported to America for CBS from Europe, east and west.

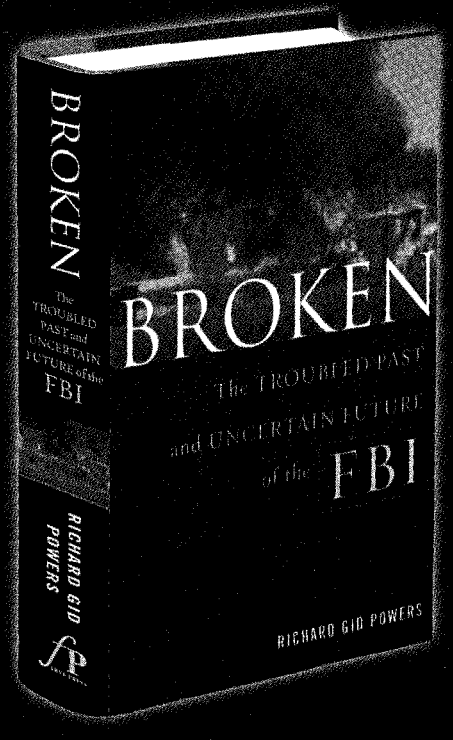
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Of all the agencies involved in intelligence and counterterrorism, the FBI comes out worst in the 9/11 commission's report."
—Richard A. Posner

BROKEN

The TROUBLED PAST and UNCERTAIN FUTURE of the FBI

RICHARD GID POWERS



Master historian Richard Gid Powers combines archival research with contemporary interviews to tell the troubled story of the FBI as it has never been told before. From the Palmer Raids during the first Red Scare to 9/11, *Broken* shines a light on the cracks in a bureau mired in scandal and corruption and reveals why its future has become gravely imperiled.

"Required reading for anyone who wants to understand how the FBI failed to operate as an effective defense against Al Qaeda in the run up to 9/11, despite the best efforts of some very fine agents."
—John Lehman, Former Secretary of the Navy and member of the 9/11 Commission

Available wherever books are sold.

FREE PRESS
A Division of Simon & Schuster
A VIACOM COMPANY
www.simonsays.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Five essential reference books worth $255.

Yours for only $19.95

(shipping is FREE)

REFERENCE BOOKS are the cornerstone of every library. With this very special introductory offer from The Folio Society, you can enjoy the luxury of a personal collection of essential books for only $19.95 (including shipping & handling).

Packed with fascinating facts and information, these five indispensable books will enable you to look up almost anything you might wish to know and can be yours at a saving of $236 on the publishers' prices. Plus, you'll receive a FREE set of *The Greek Myths,* worth $87.50, which is yours to keep whatever you decide about joining.

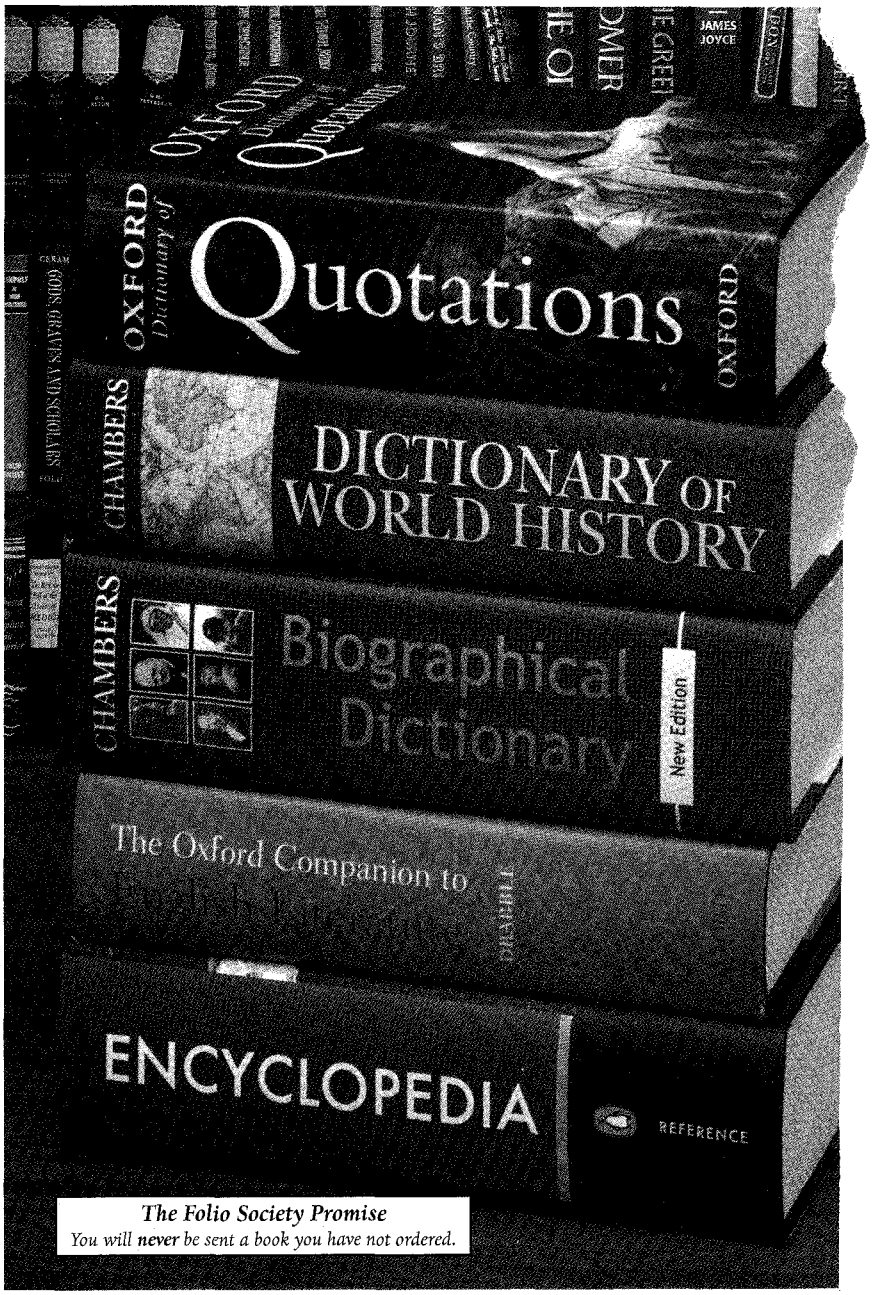
The Folio Society does not send you unsolicited books or 'choices of the month'. You simply choose four books from our catalogue to fulfill your membership.

Our current publications include modern and classic fiction, poetry, history and eye-witness accounts, notable biographies, humour, legend, and authoritative books on the classical world. Prices start at $32.95, and many of our books are less than $45.

The Folio Society, established in England in 1947, publishes books for dedicated readers who wish to rediscover the pleasures of the fine edition at an affordable price.

Simply fill out and return the coupon today or call Toll Free (24 hours) 1-800-353-0700.

THE FOLIO SOCIETY
P.O. Box 693, Holmes, PA 19043.



The Folio Society Promise
*You will **never** be sent a book you have not ordered.*

To: The Membership Secretary, The Folio Society Ltd., P.O. Box 693, Holmes, PA 19043. Fax:1-610-532-9001.

ORDER TOLL FREE 1-800-353-0700

Please accept my application for FREE trial membership of The Folio Society and send me the *Five-Volume Reference Set,* together with the Folio catalogue and my FREE set of *The Greek Myths.* If I agree to purchase at least 4 books from your catalogue I will be billed only $19.95 for the *Five-Volume Reference Set* (including shipping and handling). If I am not satisfied – for any reason – I may return the introductory set within 10 days. My membership will be cancelled and I will owe nothing. I understand that as a member of The Folio Society, I have the right to return any book if I am not completely satisfied. *The Greek Myths* is mine to keep whatever I decide.

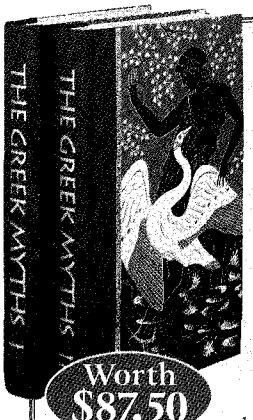
Title Name Date
BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

Address

City

State Zipcode

Please allow 21 days for delivery. Applications subject to approval. Send no money now. SW5XK5



PLUS FREE

A FOLIO TWO VOLUME SET
THE GREEK MYTHS

The Greek myths are fantastic stories full of passion, adventure, suspense and tragedy. Robert Graves tells them with great verve and flair, from Ariadne and the Minotaur to the manacling of Prometheus; Jason and the Golden Fleece to the birth of Aphrodite.

'Immensely readable' FREDERIC RAPHAEL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED